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No. 317.

The Drama

MICHAEL. *There o'er the guilty tyrannize, there wreak your rage, and muster all the pangs ye know, 'mid racks of iron, shaking chains, the shriek and gnashing of interminable woe. This heard, they fled.*

JERUSALEM DELIVERED,—TASSO.

Italian Drama

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Prologue

ITALY led the van of European nations in the Renaissance. That glorious land preserved monuments and memories of classical antiquity even when arts and literature had been buried under the ruins of the empire. There the Latin language, cherished in the ritual of the church, had never become entirely dead. After the invention of printing and the influx of learned Greeks, driven by the Turks from Constantinople, Italians eagerly embraced the study

of the classics. The humanist leaders sought to rival Cicero and Virgil, Seneca and Terence, first by direct imitation, then by free translation, finally by boldly original compositions. At this epoch in the sixteenth century we take up the story of the drama in Italy.

Tasso, the latest of Italy's four great poets, is honored by the world as the author of *Jerusalem Delivered* and pitied as the lovelorn lunatic. He should also be remembered and admired as the originator of a new species of the drama—the lyrical pastoral play, which has been perpetuated in the modern opera. To the mild genius of Metastasio is awarded the palm for this final form in which music predominates over acting. His themes were taken from ancient history and mythology, the stories are full of pathos and tenderness and the melodious verses sing themselves.

While luxurious courts were delighted with such poetic dramas, a rude comedy had long flourished among the people in spite of the condemnation of the Church and the good-natured contempt of the refined. It was distinguished, like the classical drama, by the use of masks

to designate actors of different classes, who indeed were required to speak in different dialects. To these characters we owe the familiar terms Harlequin, Pantaloon and Columbine.

A singular feature is that, though the manager sketched an outline of the play, the actors improvised their own dialogue. With an uncultivated audience this illiterate performance naturally abounded in coarse jokes and downright indecency. At last a reformer appeared in the person of Carlo Goldoni, who, after years of persistent labor, succeeded in inducing the people to accept and enjoy unmasked plays depicting the actual life of Venice.

This universal pursuit of frivolity, this degradation of the once soaring genius of Italy, was undoubtedly an effect of the lack of national unity and independence. The land which had given law to the civilized world was broken up into provinces crushed under foreign tyrants, petty duchies ruled by pleasure-lovers, and jealous republics dominated by factions. Free thought was suppressed, while academies were multiplied to purify speech but not morals. In

the arena of literature Italy lagged behind, while England, France, and Germany contended for the prize.

At the end of the eighteenth century came the great tragic poet Alfieri, who, after unlearning his native tongue, regained it to achieve its redemption. Late in beginning to write, he was marvellously industrious and published thirty tragedies, besides comedies, satires and a notable autobiography. His spirit is reflected in the revival of tragic acting in our own day, as exemplified in Ristori and Salvini. Manzoni, whose fame rests on his novel, *I Promessi Sposi*, composed two good tragedies, but without the fire and force of Alfieri. Nicolini achieved even greater success.

In the nineteeth century in Italy as elsewhere the novel has enlisted the efforts of genius. The stage has depended on importations from France. Yet D'Annunzio's dramas have been well received by his fellow-countrymen, though not attaining the praise of his sensuous lyrics and highly spiced novels.

The examples presented in this volume furnish an adequate conception of the wide range of the dramatic genius of Italy.

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Italian Drama.

I.

Tasso and the Pastoral Drama.

Torquato Tasso and Giordano Bruno, though usually included among the authors of the later Renaissance, may perhaps be better classed with the moderns. In their day the spirit of the Renaissance was worn out, and was replaced by the nervous fear which is visible all through the life of Tasso. The church authorities were endeavoring to make Rome moral by methods which might have commended themselves to the English Puritans, and commendable as was this attempt to restrain the license of the earlier Renaissance, it was still an example of the attempt to repress which was being made everywhere in Italy, and which succeeded because it had only to deal with men of a weak generation.

The life of Tasso is of itself enough to show under what a gloomy cloud literature had to work in Italy all through the later sixteenth century. It was a life of dependence dominated by fear—fear of rivals, of accusations of heresy, and even of murder. He was born in 1544, the third son of Bernardo Tasso, who was

secretary to the prince of Palermo, later becoming a dependent at the court of Urbino, where Torquato, who developed into a handsome and brilliant lad, became the companion in sports and studies of the heir to the dukedom. Here the boy read much, but nothing of the law, for which profession he was intended, and wrote his epic poem, the *Rinaldo,* much to the displeasure of his father, who wished him to qualify for a lucrative calling.

Tasso at Ferrara.

But Torquato had resolved to be a poet, and as it was necessary to find a patron for him, he was introduced to the court of Ferrara. He was now in his twenty-first year, tall, handsome, graceful, and somewhat of an athlete. He had already begun his great epic, *Jerusalem Delivered,* and his tragedy of *Torrismondo,* and had written his *Discourses on Epic Poetry.* The duke of Ferrara, Alphonso II d'Este, received him graciously, and appears to have treated him, in the main, with great kindness. The lyrical drama *Aminta* was composed and performed during the earlier years of the poet's stay at this typical Italian court.

Insanity.

When Tasso accompanied Cardinal Luigi d'Este to Paris he imagined that some treason was being plotted against him at home. Later he thought he had been accused of heresy, and refused to be pacified by the assurance of the duke and the head of the Inquisition,

to whom he submitted his writings. He fled twice from Ferrara, and twice came back. He began to accuse the duke of intending to have him murdered, and finally drew his dagger in the palace on a servant whom he suspected of trying to poison him.

In other respects Tasso behaved so much like a lunatic that finally the duke's long sufferance gave way, and the poet was sent without ceremony to the madhouse at Santa Anna, where he was kept for more than seven years, but was not harshly treated. After a few months he obtained spacious apartments, received the visits of friends, went abroad attended by responsible acquaintances, and corresponded freely with whomsoever he pleased. In his epistles he always spoke respectfully and even affectionately of the duke; but what appears in them most clearly is that he labored under a serious mental disease and was conscious of it. He complains that his disorder at times amounted to frenzy, after which his memory was weakened and his intellectual faculties enfeebled. He saw visions and heard phantom voices. Spirits made away with his books and papers. The old dread of poison returned. His bodily condition grew gradually worse, and though he does not seem to have suffered from acute attacks of illness, the physical and intellectual constitution of the man was out of gear.

Yet everything that came from the insane poet's pen during this period, was carefully preserved by the Italians. In the year 1580, he heard that part of his *Gerusalemme* was being published without his permission and without his corrections. Next year the

whole poem was given to the world, and in the following six months seven editions issued from the press. The prisoner at Santa Anna had no control over his editors, and from the masterpiece which placed him on a level with Petrarch and Ariosto he never received one penny of pecuniary profit. Battista Guarini, then a rival poet at the court of Ferrara, undertook to revise and reëdit his poems in 1582, and Tasso, in his cell, had to allow odes and sonnets, poems of personal feeling, occasional pieces of compliment, to be collected and amended, without lifting a voice in the matter.

Wanderings.

In 1586 Tasso left Santa Anna at the solicitation of Vincenzo Gonzaga, prince of Mantua. He followed his young deliverer to that city, basked a while in liberty and courtly pleasures, enjoyed a splendid reception at his paternal town of Bergamo, and produced his tragedy of *Torrismondo.* But within a few months the poet grew discontented. Gonzaga, succeeding to his father's dukedom, had scanty leisure to bestow upon him, and Tasso felt neglected. In the autumn of 1587 we find him journeying through Bologna and Loreto to Rome, and taking up his quarters there with an old friend, Scipione Gonzaga, then patriarch of Jerusalem. Next year he wandered off to Naples, where he wrote a dull poem entitled *Monte Oliveto,* returning to Rome in 1589 and again taking up his quarters with the patriarch. But the servants found him insufferable and turned him out of doors, after which he fell ill and

went to a hospital. In 1590 the patriarch again received him; but Tasso's restless spirit drove him forth to Florence; yet soon to Rome once more, then Mantua, then Florence, then Rome, then Naples, then Rome again. Such is the weary record for the years 1590-4 of a man who "wandered like the world's rejected guest," and yet was always met with the honor due to his illustrious name. At this time everything came amiss to Tasso, even though the palaces of princes, patriarchs, cardinals, nay even of popes, were open to him. But he could rest in none; he was out of joint with the world, and no sensuous comforts, no tranquility of living soothed his vexed soul.

Last Days.

But just when mental disorder, physical weakness and decay of inspiration seemed dooming Tasso to oblivion, his old age was cheered with a ray of hope. Clement VIII, who ascended the papal chair in 1592, and his nephew, Cardinal Aldobrandino, determined to befriend the poet. Two years later they invited him to Rome, where he was to assume the crown of bays, as Petrarch had assumed it, on the Capitol. Lean and worn with sickness, and ready to totter into the tomb, where at length rest might be found, he reached Rome in November. The ceremony was deferred because the cardinal had fallen ill, but the pope assigned the poet a pension and induced Prince Avellino, who held Tasso's maternal estate, to discharge a portion of his claims by the payment of a yearly rent charge. At no time since

he left Santa Anna had the heavens so smiled upon him; money and Capitolian honors were now at his disposal; but his good fortune came too late. Before the crown was worn or the pension paid, came his last illness, while ascending to the convent of St. Onofrio on a stormy April day in 1595. Seeing a cardinal's coach toiling up the steep Travertine hill, the good monks came to the door to meet it. From the carriage stepped forth the Odysseus of many wanderings and miseries, the singer of sweetest strains still vocal, and told the prior he had come to die among them.

Some three weeks later Tasso passed away, aged fifty-one, of which the twenty last years had added nothing to his fame. When he was thirty-one the *Gerusalemme* in its original form was finished, and the world was already ringing with the music of his *Aminta,* the influence of whose honeyed melodies was felt in opera and cantata for two successive generations. More than these Tasso had not to give to literature; but it is rather the succeeding years of derangement, exile, imprisonment, poverty and hope deferred that have endeared the man to us. Querulous and unreasonable as he must always appear, we love Tasso the better because he suffered through nearly a quarter of a century of slow decline, with misfortune an ever-present guest. Goethe, in his celebrated drama, *Torquato Tasso,* has from his own experience depicted vividly the struggle between the actual and the ideal, the alternate happiness and misery of a passionate poet in the artificial environment of a court. No experience on the part of a poet could have been larger. No observer could have been more

acute and accurate, nor could have employed his descriptive energy with greater vivacity and fidelity.

Aminta.

Tasso's beautiful pastoral drama or love-idyll, *Aminta,* is highly esteemed in Italy, and deserves to be better known in other languages. It was composed while he was still engaged on his great epic, whose splendor has thrown into the shade his minor works. *Aminta* belongs to the period of his happiness at the court of Ferrara, then the most brilliant in Italy. It was intended especially for the entertainment of the great ladies who had graciously received him and always befriended him. The duke's unmarried sisters, Leonora and Lucrezia d'Este, were his seniors by about ten years, had admitted the poet to their familiarity, and there is reason to believe that neither of them was indifferent to him personally. It is commonly reported that he had fallen in love with Leonora, and that the hopelessness of union with the object of his affection was the prime source of his subsequent insanity. While there is a plausibility in this report, it is more probable that his love was bestowed on Leonora Scandiano, a lady of the court.

Aminta was first performed in 1573 before the duke Alphonso and his court, to the intense delight of that gay and cultured assembly. The duke's sister, Lucrezia, who had been married to the prince of Urbino, sent for the author to read it to her at Pesaro, and in the following spring it was performed with renewed applause at her court. The sensitive poet was as much enchanted

with the rapturous favor of the audience at these exhibitions as they, in turn, were with the exquisite beauties and honeyed melodies of his pastoral drama. This skillful blending of poetry, music and dramatic art exactly suited the spirit of the age in which it appeared. It was at that very time that music was becoming the main art of Italy. Thenceforth the penetrating influence of this enchanting composition was felt in opera and cantata for more than two centuries, and throughout Europe.

The plot of this lyrical drama is simple. Aminta, we may note at the outset, is not a female name, but the Italian form of the Greek masculine Amyntas. This shepherd hero, if he may so be called, has spent his boyhood in constant companionship with the shepherdess Sylvia. But a sad change has come over their relation since his boyish friendship has ripened into ardent love. The crisis came when she was deluded into attempting to charm away the pain of a pretended bee's sting on his lip by kissing him. Thenceforth she has repelled his increasing and persistent attentions and declares herself a votary of Diana. She becomes a huntress and finds pleasure only in the chase of wild beasts. Such is the story told partly by Aminta to his friend Thyrsis, and partly by Sylvia to her confidant Daphne, who pleads Aminta's cause in vain. Sylvia even declares that she hates her former comrade, and Aminta, in despair at her avoidance of him, threatens that his misery must end in death, which alone can appease her. But Sylvia, before starting on a hunting expedition with her friend, goes to bathe in a favorite

pool. There the girls are surprised by a fierce satyr, who seizes and carries off Sylvia while Daphne escapes to give an alarm. Aminta hastens to the woods and finds Sylvia tightly bound to a tree, fastened by her hair and girdle and twigs. Though hesitating at first to approach, he partially releases her, when she, vexed at being discovered in such distress, bids him begone without thanking him. The dismayed Aminta speedily retires, and Sylvia, unfastening the twigs which still detained her, flees in the opposite direction. But in the next act a messenger brings word that Aminta, rushing to the brow of a precipice, has thrown himself headlong. Sylvia, overcome with horror at hearing of his death, begs to be led to the place, that she may atone for her fault. The lover's body is found at the foot of a cliff, and a shepherd who was standing near reports that the fall was broken by a tree and bushes. Sylvia flings herself upon the lifeless form and laments her past cruelty and hardness of heart. Aminta revives and, opening his eyes, finds himself clasped in her arms. It soon appears that, except for some scratches and bruises, he has escaped serious injury. "Happy is he who has given so great proof of his love and now tastes its sweets, to which grief and danger give a delightful relish." Such is the argument of this lyrical drama, which is divided into five acts, each closing with an ode sung by a chorus of shepherds.

Tasso is thought to have represented himself in the character of Thyrsis, and from his mouth we take his glowing, forceful and impressive description of his admission to court:

I, with all this fine foreknowledge, went
To the great city; and, by Heaven's kind will,
Came where they live so happily. The first sound
I heard was a delightful harmony,
Which issued forth, of voices loud and sweet;—
Sirens, and swans, and nymphs, a heavenly noise
Of heavenly things;—which gave me such delight,
That, all admiring, and amazing, and joyed,
I stopped a while quite motionless. There stood
Within the entrance, as if keeping guard
Of those fine things, one of a high-souled aspect,
Stalwart withal, of whom I was in doubt
Whether to think him better knight or leader.
He, with a look at once benign and grave,
In royal guise, invited me within;
He, great and in esteem; me, lorn and lowly.
Oh, the sensations and the sights which then
Shower'd on me. Goddesses I saw, and nymphs
Graceful and beautiful, and harpers fine
As Linus or as Orpheus; and more deities,
All without veil or cloud, bright as the virgin
Aurora, when she glads immortal eyes,
And sows her beams and dew-drops, silver and gold.

Jerusalem Delivered.

As one of the world's great epics, and one of the most dramatic of poems, Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered,* deserves more than passing mention. When first published it was made the excuse for a dispute among the academies which, in the sixteenth century, overran all Italy, and were chiefly famous for word-splitting. At Ferrara the poem became almost an affair of state. Its publication in a very inaccurate form, in a pirated edition, during the author's imprisonment, was one of the poet's grievances; for he had all an artist's care

about the execution of his work. The pirated edition bore the title which Tasso had chosen, *Il Goffredo,* but this he changed for *Gerusalemme Liberata* in the first authorized edition of 1581. Under the influence of the fretful piety of his later years he made an ill-advised revision, to which he gave the name of *Gerusalemme Conquistata.* In this he rigidly erased much that gave charm to the poem of his early manhood.

As in the *Rinaldo,* so also in the *Jerusalem Delivered,* Tasso aimed at ennobling the Italian epic style by preserving strict unity of plot and heightening poetic diction. He chose Virgil for his model, took the first crusade for subject, and infused the fervor of religion into his conception of the hero, Godfrey. But his own natural bias was for romance. In spite of the poet's ingenuity and industry, the stately theme of his epic displayed less spontaneity of genius than the romantic episodes with which he adorned it. Godfrey is not even the real hero of the *Gerusalemme.* The fiery and passionate Rinaldo, the melancholy, impulsive Tancredi and the chivalrous Saracens with whom they clash in love and war, divide our interest and divert it from Godfrey. On Armida, beautiful witch, sent forth by the infernal senate to sow discord in the Christian camp, turns the action of the epic. She is converted to the true faith by her adoration for a crusading knight, and quits the scene with a phrase of the Virgin on her lips. Brave Clorinda, fighting in duel with her devoted lover, and receiving baptism from his hands at her death; Erminia, seeking refuge in a shepherd's hut—these lovely pagan women, so touching in their sorrows, so romantic in their adven-

tures, so tender in their emotions, rivet our attention, while we skip the battles, religious ceremonies, conclaves and stratagems of the campaign. The truth is that Tasso was at his best in the poetry of sentiment, and it is sentiment, not sentimentality, that gives value to what is immortal in the *Gerusalemme.*

The enduring popularity of the *Jerusalem Delivered* has been vouched for in Italy by stories which tell how it was sung by gondoliers and peasants even in the nineteenth century, while Ugo Foscolo relates that he has heard passages chanted by galley-slaves. But its acceptance among poets and men of letters, in the sixteenth century and afterward, is not a matter of legend. Milton and Spenser both admired Tasso, and did not hesitate to borrow from him, or at least to imitate him. The combat between the good and bad angels in the *Paradise Lost* has its counterpart in the ninth canto of the *Jerusalem Delivered,* where Michael is sent by God to drive the infidels into hell. Acrasia's bower of bliss and the final adventure of Sir Guyon, in the second book of the *Faërie Queen,* are modeled on, and in some passages taken directly from, the description of the garden of *Armida* and the rescue of *Rinaldo* in the fifteenth and sixteenth cantos of the *Jerusalem.*

The popularity of Tasso's epic with those of the Italians who would know nothing of Dante, and very little of Ariosto, and the admiration expressed for it by poets or men of letters, are both well justified, though for different reasons. The *Jerusalem Delivered* has a beauty of form which naturally delights people who have a real love of melody, while the matter is no less

acceptable to all who are attracted rather by the pretty and the sympathetic than by the great or brilliant. The allegory, which Tasso himself afterward expounded at length, is of the order which offends nobody, and, as one of his critics has observed, we can watch the fortunes of Tancred and Clorinda, of Rinaldo and Armida, of Godfrey and the crusaders, "as if we looked on that scene through an inverted telescope, whereby the whole was carried far away into the distance, the life-large figures compressed into brilliant miniatures, so clear, so real, yet tiny, elf-life and beautified as well as lessened, their colors being now closer and brighter, the shadows and trivial features no longer visible."

Godfrey's Battle with the Soldan.

Of the battle scenes, perhaps the most powerful is in the ninth canto, where is described the great conflict for the possession of Jerusalem between the forces of Godfrey and the Soldan:

The Soldan rushes on, the foremost he,
  Upon the guards' unranged and startled pow'r
So swift that slower doth the storm-blast flee
  From caverned mountains in tempestuous hour.
Torrent that hurls away the house and tree,
  Thunder that batters down and burns the tow'r,
Earthquake that o'er the world a horror flings,
Poised with his fury are but trifling things.

His weapon never falls except to hit;
  Nor hits it ever without wounding, too;
Nor wounds but that a soul away doth flit:
  More would I say, but false would seem the true.

He sure must feign, or from all pain be quit,
Or else not feel the strokes which they renew,
Although his battered helm with bell-like sound
Rings out, and sparkles horribly around.

The Christians fight bravely, especially Latinus and his five sons "born where Tiber flows"—

But as a rock exposed to stormy blast,
Which, wave-struck, doth o'er sea its mass uprear,
Firm in itself endures the billows vast,
The winds, the bolts, the wrath of Heaven severe;
Thus doth the fiery Soldan here stand fast
With haughty front against the sword, the spear,
And cleaves the head of him who is aiming now
To smite his steed, between the cheek and brow.

Then Godfrey appears on the scene and restores the fight:

Godfrey, where'er he sees his people show
Their backs dismayed, runs thither and threats the base:
"What fear," he cries, "is this? whither then go?
Behold at least who 'tis that gives you chase.
A vile troop chases you which does not know
How to receive nor give wounds on the face:
And if they see you turned against them now,
Will dread the weapons even of your brow."

This said, he pricks his steed, and makes him wheel
To where he had seen the Soldan's murderous wrong:
And through the midst of blood, and dust, and steel,
And imminent risks, and deaths, he goes along,
With sword and thrust each path doth he unseal
However closed each rank, however strong,

And down on either side ne'er fails to strike
Horsemen and horses, arms and armed alike.

* * * * * * *

The Archangel to the Rescue.

But the fiend Aluto and the legions of hell had come to the aid of the murderous Turks. It is time, therefore, for heaven to interpose in behalf of the Christians.

Meanwhile the King of Heaven from His grand seat
Bent down His eyes upon the battle's heat.

There sat He whence, both good and just, He sways
  All worlds, and frames all by His word alone,
Above the low bounds of earth's narrow maze
  At heights of sense and reason all unknown,
And shone with three lights blent into one blaze
  Upon eternity's majestic throne.
Nature and Fate are at His feet submiss,
And Motion also, and what measures this,

And Place, and she who spoils and rolls from sight
  Like vapor, or like dust, earth's every prize,
Gold, glory, empire, as above seems right,
  Nor Goddess, ever heeds our human sighs.
Here so involves He Him in His own light
  That e'en the worthiest veil their dazzled eyes:
Him numberless immortal spirits surround,
Equal unequally in their joy profound.

The heavenly palace echoes to the song
  Attuned in grand consent by joyous quire.
He summons Michael, who in armor strong
  Of lucid adamant flames forth like fire;
And says: "Perceiv'st thou not how Hell's bad throng
  Against my faithful cherished flock conspire

In arms rebellious, and from lowest deep
To vex the world on soaring pinion sweep!

"Go; tell them, thou, no more henceforth to mell
With war, which warriors only should sustain;
Nor to disturb and poison with their spell
The kingdom of the quick and Heaven's domain.
Let them return to the deep glooms of Hell,
Their worthy dwelling, and to their just pain;
Torment themselves there and the souls below.
So I command, and I have fixed it so."

He ceased. The leader of the winged host
Bowed reverent down at the Almighty's feet.
Then for the flight his golden vans he tossed
Fleet so that thought itself is not so fleet.
The spheres of fire and light are quickly crossed
Where blest ones have their fixed and glorious seat.
Then the pure crystal, then the starry sphere
Which rolls with an inverted course, is near.

* * * * * * *

Arrived where the impious troop of Hell prepare
To make still more the Pagan fury rise;
Poised on the vigor of his wings in the air,
He stops and shakes his spear, and to them cries:
"Well must ye know with what horrific glare
The thunder of the world's Creator flies,
O ye who, 'mid contempt and bitterest ill
Of wretchedness extreme, are haughty still.

"'Tis fixed in Heaven that Sion shall unchain
Her gates, her walls bow to the Cross's might.
Why war then upon Fate? and the disdain
Of the Celestial Court why thus invite?
Hence, ye accursed, to your own domain,
Domain of torment and of death outright,
And in that region, doomed to be your cell,
Wage all your wars, and all your triumphs tell.

"Be cruel there; there on the guilty lay
  Your weight of spite, and let your power appear,
'Mid endless cries, and gnashing teeth, and bray
  Of steel, and shaken chains that rend the ear."
He spake, and whom he saw reluctant stay,
  Them pushed and smote he with his fatal spear.
They from the lovely realms of light were driven,
And groaning left the golden stars of Heaven:

And downward tow'rd the abyss their wings they fanned
  To exasperate in the damned their wonted woe.
There crosses not the sea a flight so grand
  Of birds in search of suns with warmer glow;
Nor Autumn e'er sees fall upon the land
  So many dry leaves when the chill winds blow.
Relieved from these, the world soon puts away
Its gloomy aspect, and again is gay.

The Fight Goes On.

But the combat is not over yet; for the infidels, with Soldan still at their head, withstand the onslaught of the Franks—

A thousand veteran Turks were here enrolled,
  All covered with the mail, and helm, and shield;
Untamed of limb in toil, or heat, or cold,
  Of ardent spirit, skillful in the field;
And these had been the soldiers from of old
  Of Solyman; and when he was concealed
In Arab deserts, in reverse still true,
Had followed him his hapless wanderings through.

These drawn together, ceased not to make head
  Against the Franks' attacks however keen.
On these did Godfrey rush, and smite the dread
  Corcutes' face, and on the flank Rostene.

From Selim's shoulders he unloosed the head,
Cut off the right and left arm of Rossene:
Nor these alone, but more he wounded still
In other modes, and many did he kill.

While thus he smote the Saracens, and drew
Upon himself in turn full many a scar,
And in no part did that Barbarian crew
Abate in hope, or quail to Fortune's star;
Behold now near a cloud of dust anew,
Which holds within its bosom bolts of war:
Lo! unforeseen issues a flash of arms
Which fills the Pagan camp with deep alarms.

There are full fifty warriors who unfold
On silver pure the conquering purple cross.
Nor could I with a hundred mouths have told,
A hundred tongues, and iron lungs and voice,
What numbers did that squadron fiercely bold
Beat down in its fierce charge with death or loss.
Falls the weak Arab; and the Turk, unknown
To yield, resisting, fighting, is o'erthrown.

What earthly force can do the Soldan brave
Meanwhile has done, and more is now denied.
He is all blood and sweat, and pantings grave
And frequent hurt his breast and shake his side.
His languid arm no more the shield can wave;
Slowly his sword moves, and in wheels less wide;
It bruises, and not cuts, and grown obtuse,
The weapon now has lost a weapon's use.

Aware of this, he seemed in the act to stand
Of one who weighed two schemes; and to debate
If he should perish, and with his own hand
Rob others of the fame from deed so great;
Or else, surviving his defeated band,
Prolong his life to a more distant date.

"Let Fate then win," he said at last, "and be
My flight the trophy of its victory."

The Knight's Voyage to Elysium.

We turn to peaceful scenes, where the two knights, Ubald and Charles, instructed by a sage, seek Rinaldo, held enchained by Armida's magic arts, after being instructed how to overcome them. Many and strange are their adventures before they arrive at Armida's enchanted gardens.

Already the first ray, serene and fair,
  Had called to toil each creature of the field,
When the sage coming to the knightly pair
  Brought them the golden rod, the chart, and shield.
"For the grand voyage," he exclaimed, "prepare,
  Ere day which dawns e'en now be more revealed;
Lo, here is that for which I gave my plight,
And which will overcome all magic sleight."

Already had they risen, already braced
  Their trusty armor on the vigorous limb:
Hence along paths uncheered by day with haste
  They went with that old man: and led by him,
Retrod the self-same track o'er which they paced
  At their first coming from the water's rim.
But when they had attained his river's bed,
"I bid you adieu; go prosper, friends!" he said.

The stream received them where it deeply sank,
  And gently thrusting, made them upward glide,
As it is wont to raise light bough or plank
  Which force has pushed far down into its tide:
It left them then upon the grassy bank.
  Hence they beheld the already promised guide:
They marked a pinnace; and the fatal maid
Who should escort them at the rudder stayed.

"Enter," she said, "ye blest, this bark of mine
With which secure I cross the ocean road,
To which all breezes blow with favoring sign,
All storms are calm, and light is every load.
To serve and guide you has my Lord divine
Sped me with haste; to Him this grace is owed."
Thus spoke the maid; then nearer to the bank
She made the curving pine present its flank.

Soon as it has received the noble pair
She thrusts the shore, and lets the cable slack;
And having loosed the sail to the light air,
She seats her at the helm and rules the track.
The torrent is so swollen that it would bear
The largest burdens now upon its back:
But this one is so slight that stream less great
From recent moisture would uphold its weight.

The vessel takes them past the Egyptian camp, and skirting the coast of Africa, glides between the Pillars of Hercules, as then were called the straits of Gibraltar, and turns toward the south, where presently they behold the famous Peak of Teneriffe.

They looked afar, and saw a mountain shroud
Its lofty forehead in a wreath of cloud.

And they perceived it, as they drew more nigh,
And it had wholly lost its cloudy vest,
Like a sharp pyramid athwart the sky,
Large in the mist and fine toward the crest;
And it appeared to send up smoke on high,
Like the one upon Enceladus his breast;
Whose nature 'tis to smoke while day is bright,
And then illume the skies with flames at night.

Lo! other isles together, and they came
To other slopes at last, less steep and tall;

These were the Happy Islands, by which name
  The olden ages had been wont to call
A group so favored by the skies (thus fame
  Made men believe) that here the lands would all
Bring forth spontaneous, and without the plow,
And vines untilled yield sweeter fruits than now.

Here olive blossoms did not vainly teem,
  Here honey dropped out from the hollowed ash;
And down from every mountain hied the stream
  With sparkling water and with murmuring plash:
And breeze and dew so tempered the sunbeam
  That nothing here e'er felt its fervent lash;
Here were the Elysian Fields; and here repose
The famous mansions where blessed souls repose.

The knights would debark on one of these islands, but the maiden has no power to grant their request; for

These are the Isles of Fortune at our side.
Nor may ye bring o'er ocean's deep abyss
To your own world true knowledge home from this.

Rinaldo in Armida's Garden.

Soon they come to a group of islands to the eastward, and into a port in one of them the sailor-maid guides her barque, and directs the knights how to find the spot they are seeking. After climbing a steep hill, they come to the banks of a stream, and journey inland to a veritable paradise, filled with song-birds, where

All creatures felt them borne by love along.

Amid the melodies which so softly waken,
  And 'mid such flattering and alluring wiles,

That pair speed on; and rigid and unshaken
Steel them against each pleasure that beguiles.
When lo! their glance, nor can it be mistaken,
Sent onward pierces through the leafy aisles,
And sees the lover and the maid adored,
Him on her bosom laid, her on the sward.

Her bosom through the drawn veil meets the view,
And in the warm breeze her loose hair is roving:
She languishes with joy, and her cheek's hue
Shows livelier 'neath drops of heat unmoving.
As ray through wave, a sparkling smile shines through
Her liquid eyes now tremulous and loving.
O'er him she hangs; his head assumes a place
On her soft breast with face upturned to face.

And while his hungry looks greedily reap
From her their food, he wastes himself in sighs.
She stoops and sucks now from his lips a heap
Of kisses, and now sips them from his eyes:
And at that point he heaves a sigh so deep
That he imagines: "Now my spirit flies
And travels o'er to her!" The warrior pair
Still hidden, watch those amorous actions there.

Down from her lover's side, O strange attire!
There hung a crystal furbished all and bright.
He rose and held it forward for her nigher,
The chosen minister of Cupid's rite.
Her laughing eyes, and his lit up with fire
See but one object present to the sight:
She makes the glass her mirror: he supplies
A mirror to himself in her fair eyes.

"Ah! since thou scornest me, thou mayest there
At least behold how fair is thine own face,
For thus thy glance, which is not pleased elsewhere,
Turned tow'rd itself may joy at its own grace.

No mirror can portray a form so fair,
  Nor in small glass a Paradise find space.
Thy mirror should be Heaven, whose orbs of light
Alone reflect to thee thy charms aright."

Armida smiled at this, but still pursued
  Her self-delight and pretty toils of old.
When she had woven her hairs, and had subdued
  With graceful discipline their errors bold,
She curled the smaller locks and 'mid them strewed
  Rich flowers which seemed enamel upon gold;
And o'er her bosom's native lilies pale
Flung foreign roses, and composed her veil.

Nor beauteous thus the peacock when his store
  Of bright-eyed plumes in conscious pomp is dight:
Nor Iris when she gilds and purples o'er
  Her curved and dewy bosom to the light.
But fairer than aught else the cest she wore,
  Which she kept ever round her, e'en by night.
Body to bodiless things did she affix;
And mixed to make it what none else may mix.

Tender disdains, rebukes mild and discreet,
  Endearing arts, and concord full of bliss,
Smiles, little words, and drops of sorrow sweet,
  And broken sighs, and many a gentle kiss:
All these she fused, and tempered them with heat
  Of sluggish torches which were kept remiss;
And formed of them that admirable cest
Which now around her lovely side was pressed.

Her wooing done at last, she bids adieu
  To the fond youth, kisses him and departs.
Each day she is wont to go forth and review
  Her own affairs, and search her magic charts.
He stays; for never may he thence pursue
  His path, or moment spend in other parts,

And, save when occupied with her, he roves
A lonely lover 'mong the beasts and groves.

Rinaldo Disenchanted.

Meanwhile Ubald comes forth from his hiding-place and turns full on the sight of Rinaldo the "adamantine shield," with its magic power.

He turns his glance to the bright shield thus bare,
Which shows him what he is; and with what pride
Of delicacy adorned, his dress and hair
Breathe wanton odors that would grace a bride:
He sees his sword, yes, e'en his sword, made fair
By too much feminine luxury at his side:
An useless ornament thus decked it seems,
Not like a weapon that for battle gleams.

As one by deep and heavy sleep oppressed
After long dream regains his wonted lore,
So by that glance his senses were redressed:
But he can gaze upon himself no more.
Down falls his glance, and, timid and depressed,
Shame keeps it fixed upon the grassy floor.
He'd plunge in ocean, into fire would creep,
To hide himself, aye, seek the central deep.

Then Ubald seized the moment to exclaim:
"In arms all Asia and all Europe stand;
Whoever adores Christ, and longs for fame,
Now toils in warfare in the Syrian land.
Thou only, son of Bertold, idly tame
Art locked out from the world on this small strand.
Thou only art not moved by the grand whirl
Of war, egregious champion of a girl.

"What sleep, what lethargy so long benights
Thy valor? what vile quest does it pursue?

Up! thee the camp, thee Godfrey now invites;
Fortune expects thy sword, and victory too.
Come, fatal warrior, end the task which cites
Its former champion, and let that ill crew,
Whom thou hast shaken erst, be lowly laid,
Struck down by thy inevitable blade."

He ceased; the noble youth, confused a space,
And without voice or gesture, made a pause,
But when shame yielded up to scorn its place,
Scorn the fierce champion here of reason's cause,
And following up the redness of his face
A new fire came which burnt with fiercer jaws;
He tore those empty ornaments away,
Those pomps unworthy, slavery's base array;

And hastened, as one even now too late,
Forth from that tortuous labyrinthine chain.
Meanwhile Armida at the regal gate
Marked on the ground its fiery guardian slain.
She guessed at once, and soon she knew her fate,
That her beloved had broken from the rein;
And sees him turn his back, ah! cruel sight!
On that delightful home in hasty flight.

But we cannot further follow this magnificent epic, which, though less known than the *Iliad, Æneid,* or *Paradise Lost,* is doubtless familiar to the cultured reader.

Between Tasso or Bruno and any of their contemporaries the difference is very great. There was no lack of interest in literary matters, and there was no want of criticism of a certain kind. The long controversy over the *Jerusalem,* in which Tasso allowed himself to be involved, if valuable for nothing else, was at least a proof that the Italians read poetry, and knew how to

talk about it; but what they could not do at this period was to produce anything original and valuable. The once famous *Pastor Fido* of Guarini is an example of what may happen to a literature when its writers have become highly cultivated in all that pertains to language but have nothing to say—or if they have, are cowed into insignificance by the fear of compromising themselves. Guarini was a man of character, a little querulous and afflicted by a vanity which caused him to be forever comparing himself to Tasso, and complaining of his contemporary's greater fame; but he was by no means without parts or knowledge. Yet his *Pastor Fido* was a mere echo of the *Aminta*. Guarini's play, if such it can be called, was first acted at Turin in 1585, and from it came the Italian literary opera of later times. The verse is flowing, with touches of a somewhat sensual lusciousness, but it is nerveless and imitative.

II.

The Lyrical Drama.

As compared with the era of the Renaissance, the seventeenth century was for Italy a period of literary stagnation, relieved only by the endeavor to conceal decay in fantastic extravagance, by the commencement of a reaction near the close of the cycle, and by occasional progress in isolated directions, which in a more favored era would have been fruitful of important results. The false taste which disfigures this epoch was not peculiar to Italy; but while in other countries it appears as a symptom of exuberant life, in Italy it dominates literature. What elsewhere was a mere disorder of youth, was in Italy premature old age. For this decadence no other cause can be assigned than the withering away of national life under the blight of civil and ecclesiastical tyranny.

Causes of Decadence.

Although the reigns of Charles V and Philip II appear among the most brilliant in history, this was also a period when chains were forged to subdue the in-

tellect of mankind, and when genius, arrested in its course, was compelled to retrace its steps. These monarchs, who reaped all the advantage of the munificent labors of their predecessors, failed to scatter, in their turn, the seeds of cultivation; and every province subjected to their dominion was doomed alike to intellectual sterility. It is almost impossible to convey an idea of the suspicious, yet lethargic, nature of the Spanish government under the three Philips, II, III and IV, over nearly one-half of Italy, embracing Milan, Naples, Sicily, and Sardinia, extending likewise, with scarcely less authority, over the territories of the pope, and over the dukedoms of Italy, which had occasion to solicit its protection. Enormous duties, unequally and absurdly exacted, destroyed commerce, and exhausted and depopulated the country; while governors enriched themselves by cruel and overwhelming extortions, which excited an universal feeling of hatred and contempt for the blind infatuation and injustice of such a system. The course of interminable wars, in which the court of Madrid persisted during the whole period that the house of Austria wielded the sceptre of Spain, had drained the finest provinces of their wealth and population, and left them open to the depredations of the Turks, to the invasion of the French, to the masked wars of the Piedmontese, and to the residence of German and Spanish troops, even more to be dreaded than the enemy.

All free inquiry was considered in the light of an attack upon the government; while the liberty of the press was rigidly prohibited, as well as the least dis-

cussion relating to public affairs. Nor were such coercive measures confined to the circulation of obnoxious writings. All persons accused of having prohibited books in their possession were subjected to the severest civil and religious penalties. In order to render this oppressive system still more effectual, and to extend its sway over the mind, the Inquisition was resorted to, as a final means of perpetuating the despotism already established. Not that this tribunal was instituted with a view to the interests of religion, or even to the interests of the clergy. The policy pursued by the court of Madrid was to introduce the doctrines of the council into other states, in order to enfeeble and distract them, and while setting no bounds to its authority, it would never consent to recognize them. Hence the perpetual inconsistency we everywhere observe between its professions and its conduct; and thus persecution was rendered still more intolerable, because its objects were misunderstood and its limits could never be foreseen. Abuses only seemed to be respected; civil liberty was openly invaded; and the popular rights in every point betrayed. Men suspected of entertaining liberal views, no less than of overt actions, were subjected to cruel and atrocious punishments, inflicted rather for torture and revenge than in the course of justice and the laws, which were, indeed, no longer administered. Churches and monasteries served as a safe asylum for guilt; while the viceroys, governors of the cities, and other agents of the government, took hired bandits into their service, remunerating deeds of outrage committed by their

authority with spoil and impunity. Even convents scrupled not to make use of the same weapons; and in the conspiracy of the monk Campanella, the people witnessed, not without astonishment, the priests of Calabria, arming with their own hands many thousands of banditti, who encamped in military order before the towns, so that it required a large escort to pass between them.

Such a state of anarchy, together with the universal hatred borne by the Italians toward the Spaniards, led to repeated efforts to free themselves from their yoke. The insurrections at Naples and Messina, in 1647-8, rescued nearly the whole of the two Sicilies from the sway of Spain; nor were they again recovered, until recourse was had to treachery where open force had failed. The Milanese, exposed to the continual passage of troops destined for the wars in France and Germany, did not dare openly to revolt; but the public discontent, and the fixed determination of the people to shake off the ignominious yoke, were the foundations of the power of the house of Savoy, which secretly aggrandized itself at the expense of the Austrian Government.

Origin of the Opera.

The rise of the opera may, perhaps, be considered as the only literary event of the seventeenth century of which Italy can justly boast, and this is so intimately associated with the drama proper that a brief account of its earlier development will be here in place. With the decline of literature, the triumph of the various

arts of design had also ceased. Michael Angelo had been the contemporary of Ariosto; his pupils and successors flourished in the time of Tasso; and thenceforward the flashes of true genius no longer animated the canvas or the poet's page. The astonishing progress of musical science, however, succeeded to that of the sister arts, as if the intellectual energies of man sought development in the only career left open to them; and those who felt within themselves the impulse of a creative faculty, had recourse, as a last resort, to harmony, in which they might give full and uncontrolled expression to their genius, without encountering the wrath of the Inquisition. Nor were the Italians, from their organization, less susceptible to the charms of music than of poetry and painting. A fine natural taste led them at once to appreciate, with little effort or reflection, whatever was most pure and beautiful of its kind. The increasing progress and importance of music, at a time when poetry was on the decline, gave the former such a superiority that poetry became a mere accessory and ornament to it, and was rendered subservient to the merest trifles, and to all the variations and fashions of the day; while the sister art approached nearer and nearer to perfection, in proportion to its established importance, and to the influence which it exerted over the other arts.

In imitation of the Greeks, the chorus had been introduced into Italian tragedy, and it was invariably sung. Pastoral dramas were likewise interspersed with songs and accompanied with instruments. But music had been only accessory in such compositions,

intended to give zest and perfection to the entertainment, but not to constitute its essence. The first occasion on which this order was reversed was in the year 1594, when Ottavio Rinuccini, a Florentine poet, with little originality, but with a fine musical ear, united his efforts with those of three musicians—Peri, Corsi and Caccini. Together they produced a mythological drama, in which they intended to reveal the united excellence of their productions in the most splendid dress. Rinuccini appeared to care less for his reputation as a poet than for displaying the art of his associates to the greatest advantage. He neglected nothing which might increase the attraction in the way of decorations and machinery, and surprise or captivate the senses of the audience. Men of letters had, at least, preserved the memory of the musical declamation of the Greeks, but Peri or Caccini imagined he had discovered that this consisted in the recitative, which was blended so intimately with the poetry that there was nothing to be merely spoken throughout the whole of the opera. Thus poetry, written only with a view to being sung, very soon assumed a different character; and the development of scenes, already too extended, was no longer admissible. The poet's object was to produce effect, and to this he readily sacrificed the conduct of the piece, hastening or retarding the course of events as he thought best adapted to musical exhibition, rather than to the natural expression of the passions.

Rinuccini's first attempt consisted of little more than one of Ovid's metamorphoses thrown into dialogue.

Apollo is exhibited in the act of wounding the serpent Python, while the nymphs and shepherds are seen in flight. Scornful in his victory, he ventures to taunt the god of love, who takes his usual revenge. Smitten with Daphne's beauty, Apollo pursues her; she flies, and a shepherd soon after appears, who tells the story of her metamorphosis. From these scant materials was evolved the entire operetta, with its four choruses, divided into as many short acts, and barely containing altogether 450 verses. The choruses are given in very easy couplets, which seem to be admirably adapted for music. The remaining portion was probably altogether recitative, as we find no detached airs, duets or pieces by several voices. Such was the lowly origin of what Voltaire calls "that beautiful monster, the opera," which threatened for a time to supersede the regular drama.

The *Euridice* of Rinuccini followed his *Daphne,* and was produced, likewise, in unison with the same musicians. It was first represented in 1600, on the occasion of the nuptials of Mary de' Medici and Henry IV of France. Shortly afterward appeared his *Ariana,* the reception of which was no less brilliant. The success of the opera was thus assured, and soon every court eagerly followed the example held out by Florence. Improvements followed rapidly. More lively action was given to the dramatic portions and greater variety to the music, in which the airs were agreeably blended with the recitative. Duets and other harmonized pieces were also added; and, later, Apostolo Zeno carried it to the highest development attained,

until the spirit of Metastasio breathed a soul of fire into the ingenious creations of others.

Apostolo Zeno.

Apostolo Zeno was born of a Venetian family in 1669. Passionately devoted to the study of history, he was the first to introduce historical pieces into the scenes of the opera, instead of confining himself, as others had done, within the limits of mythology. The reputation of French tragedy had already begun to extend throughout Europe; and he freely availed himself of its best productions, using them as his models. Of sixty operas which he brought before the public, the most complete and successful were undoubtedly those in which he had imitated the French classics. Thus, the whole of the plot, the incidents and the characters of his *Iphigenia* are borrowed from Racine, and used in such way as he thought best adapted to the opera. The language of the passions is throughout imbued with that solemn harmony with which music so well accords, without, however, arriving at the vigor and brevity of tragedy. The historical pieces which he produced are somewhat of a burlesque on history; for in this direction his genius did not incline. While constantly dwelling on the passion of love, he is deficient in the harmony, delicacy and ardor which, in Metastasio, transport us out of ourselves. Zeno, likewise, composed several comic operas, which appeared about the same time as those of a more serious kind. They were modeled upon the extemporized

comedies already well known, in which harlequins, columbines and other masks of the Italian theatre appear as the principal personages. But Zeno did not exhibit much talent in the lighter vein of opera, and this very amusing branch of popular entertainment, to which Italy is indebted for much of her most attractive music, has never been illustrated by any superior ability.

Zeno was invited to Vienna by the Emperor Charles VI, where he was invested with the two very opposite employments of imperial historiographer and poet laureate to the court opera. He lived to be eighty-one, and in his old age had the mortification of finding his reputation eclipsed by Metastasio.

Metastasio.

Born at Rome, on the third day of January, 1698, Metastasio was apprenticed to the trade of a goldsmith, but was educated by a friend of the family, the jurist Gravina, who, appreciating his fine talents, took him into his own household, changing his name from Trapassi to the Greek translation of the same word, Metastasio, as more refined. Gravina also took care to have him instructed in every branch of knowledge likely to facilitate his progress in poetic art, whereby his powers were so thoroughly cultivated that he was enabled to express the finest traits of sentiment and passion with equal grace and facility. But Metastasio especially devoted himself to the style of composition by which he attained celebrity. At the early age of fourteen he

wrote a tragedy, entitled *Justin*, which, though in truth a very indifferent production, does honor to one so young. Thenceforth his attention was turned entirely to opera, and even his tragedy was itself almost in the nature of an opera. The flow of the verse is extremely musical, and airs are introduced into his chorus in the same manner as those inserted, at a later period, in his more finished productions. Gravina afterward accompanied his pupil to Crotona, his native place, that he might further prosecute his studies. Soon after his return to Rome he died, leaving Metastasio a property which made him independent.

For a century and a half Italy had been unable to boast of her literary superiority, but in Metastasio nature seemed to have made ample amends, for none of her writers ever more completely united all the qualities that constitute a poet—vivacity of imagination and refinement of feeling, combined with every charm of versification and expression. Nor shall we easily find one who, by the mere force of his style, was entitled to be considered a more graceful painter or a more delightful musician. Metastasio, however, made no pretensions to the highest order of genius. He did not aim at those lofty and vigorous creations which inspire us by their sublimity. He wished only to be the poet of the opera, and in this he succeeded, confining himself to the path which he had marked out, and in that path surpassing the most distinguished writers of Italy, if not of Europe. He very correctly appreciated the peculiar character of the theatre to which he devoted his talents, and in a species of com-

position which had never conferred much reputation on any other author, has produced, perhaps, the most national form of poetry that Italy can boast, certainly the one most deeply impressed upon the memory and feelings of the people.

Metastasio composed no less than eighteen hundred pieces, including twenty-eight grand operas, besides many of a shorter kind, a number of ballets and celebrations of festivals—a species of dialogue intermixed with musical airs and recitative, very frequently enlivened by dramatic action. He borrowed his subjects almost indiscriminately from mythology or history, and brought upon the stage most of the different peoples and different countries belonging to the ancient world. He is also indebted to Ariosto for one of his more romantic and chivalric pieces, entitled *Ruggiero*, which must be referred to the middle ages. It is to this very enlarged view of different countries, ages and manners that Metastasio owes all those ornamental features introduced into his lyric scenes, the great variety of his decorations and costumes and even that richness of local imagery in which his poetry abounds. But he has been less successful in delineation of character, interests and passions, for, carried away by his exquisite musical taste, he sacrificed the highest objects of his art to the gratification of this feeling. Music, however well adapted to give expression to the passions, cannot serve to mark different situations, manners and characters, and he who should attempt to use it for such purposes would simply make it appear ridiculous. We should, for instance, feel disgusted at hearing barbarism cele-

brated in wild and savage strains; or, if in singing of love, it were attempted also to convey an idea of the pride of the Romans or the despotism of the Orientals.

By many of the Italians Metastasio has been ranked as a tragedian, but to this he is not entitled, nor ought he to be held out as a model in any species of composition but that of the opera. His poetry must not be divested for a moment of its musical attractions, nor should it be put into the mouths of tragic actors, as too often has been and is the case in Italy. We feel that the object of real tragedy is to call forth the most powerful emotions by pictures of human fate and wretchedness, and we know that feelings cannot be thus deep and powerful which are not essentially founded on nature and truth. The tragic poet transports us at once into the very place he has chosen, to make us the witness of some terrific action; and here we expect to find places, manners, prejudices and passions, everything in union together and as a consistent whole. We must be made to breathe, as it were, the very atmosphere, glowing with the words and spirit of the heroes, contending with their destiny around us. This was the triumph of the Greek theatre, and this the English and the Germans have also succeeded in effecting. The failure of the French tragedians has been generally attributed to their giving to all the great personages of antiquity the language and sentiments of their own countrymen, and nowhere is this more apparent than in the works of such acknowledged masters as Corneille and Racine. Thus the Horace and Cinna of the former and the Andromaque and Phedre of the latter speak and

move in a French atmosphere, and so with Voltaire, whose Brutus and Cæsar are still more thoroughly gallicized.

Hypsipyle.

A correct idea of the drama of Metastasio can best be obtained from an analysis of one of his most finished pieces, and for this purpose may be selected the *Hypsipyle*, which, in its varieties of incident and character, will serve to explain the fabric of Italian opera. The play is, perhaps, one of the most poetical of his works; it combines many scenes of romantic interest, and as the danger to which the leading characters are exposed is very well maintained, it keeps alive the attention of the spectators. The versification is likewise superior, and the dialogue, by turns, touching, eloquent and impassioned. To enjoy it as we ought we must create for ourselves an illusion, which may serve to disguise the many improbabilities of facts and character; and, abandoning ourselves to its impulses, we must wander through an ideal world, where everything is new and where even moral laws take their source in other principles.

The scene is placed in Lemnos and the theatre represents the temple of Bacchus, whose rites are about to be celebrated. Hypsipyle appears with her confidant Rhodope, both in the character of Bacchantes. A terrible oath, binding her to a frightful conspiracy of the Lemnian women, has just passed her lips. It is to massacre the whole Lemnian army on its return from a long expedition into Thrace. The princess commands Rho-

dope to hasten toward the shore to prevent, if possible, her father, King Thoas, from disembarking; but it is too late, and Eurynome, one of the most desperate of the Bacchantes, who originated the project of assassinating all their brothers and husbands, announces his arrival. She stirs up the fury of the Bacchantes by exciting their jealousy, and gives final orders for the massacre, which is to be executed during the night. Hypsipyle encourages it, and seems by her language more ferocious than Eurynome herself. The speech of Eurynome has the twofold merit of expressing the eloquent feeling of the moment, and of explaining to the spectator the motives and mysteries of this strange conspiracy in such a manner as to give them at least an air of probability.

Most noble princess,
And you, brave comrades of our enterprise,
Lo! from the Thracian shores once more returning,
The faithless Lemnians claim their native soil.
But, be it ours to visit their offenses
With vengeance due. True, they return, but how?
Have not three summer suns
Witness'd our harvest toils
Neglected and unaided? Now they come
To give the offspring of their stolen embraces
Into your laps; while each barbarian mistress,
Wild as the savage beast, whose milk she drew,
With painted visage mocks your slighted charms.
Revenge, revenge, our wrongs!
We have vow'd it, and our vow must be fulfill'd.
Fortune looks smiling on,
And favoring night her curtain lends
To shield our enterprise. While the glad god,
Whose noisy rites we celebrate,
With joyous songs shall drown their feeble cries.

Let fathers, sons, and brothers,
And falsest consorts, in one fate be buried.
For us, be ours the glory or the blame;
A proud example to the ingrate race
Of woman's wrath, for violated faith.

Thoas arrives with his Lemnians, but Hypsipyle ventures not to return his caresses. Full of grief, she beholds him surrounded by his soldiers; a word from his daughter's mouth would save him and his valiant companions from an ignominious death, by an open combat with the women, the result of which could not be doubtful. There is, moreover, little to excuse the indignation of the Lemnian women. The character of Thoas has all the qualities of manly prudence, kindness and love. The language found for him by the poet is remarkable for the paternal affection it displays; but a different character would have thrown a greater air of probability over the conspiracy of which he is the victim.

Thoas.—Long loved, and loved in vain,
Come to a father's arms, my child, my daughter,
I cannot tell how sad and wearily
The weight of my long years has on me press'd,
Since thus I fondly held you to my breast.
Now you again are near me; now I feel
The burden of my years sit light and easy
Upon an old man's head.

Hypsipyle.—(Aside.) My heart will break.

Tho.—But why so sad and silent,
My little girl? and why so strangely cold—
A father just restored?

Hyp.—Alas! you know not,
My lord. (Aside.) Ye gods, what torture!

Tho.—Is it my return
That grieves you thus?

Hyp.—Would you could read my heart!

Tho.—Nay, tell me all!

Hyp.—Ye gods!

Tho.—What is't that moves you? Speak!
Can th' hymeneal rites, which the young prince
Hastens from Thessaly to celebrate,
Displease my daughter?

Hyp.—No, sire; from the moment
I saw him first, I loved him.

Tho.—Can it be
You fear to lose the power my absence gave you?
Fear not. No longer sovereign prince or king
Am I. Still govern at your pleasure here,
Reward, and punish.—No desire have I,
But here to live, and in your arms to die.

In the meanwhile Thoas and the Lemnians retire to rest and Hypsipyle repeats her promise to assassinate her father. Eurynome now unfolds the cause of her desperate attempt. Her object is to avenge her son Learchus, who, having made an attempt to carry off Hypsipyle, had been banished by Thoas and was believed to have died in exile. Eurynome next gives orders for beginning the massacre, but as she disappears, Learchus enters upon the scene, where he meets Rhodope, who had formerly bestowed her affections upon him. She eagerly beseeches him to fly from a place where every man is doomed to destruction; but Learchus will not believe her. As the captain of a band of pirates, he has entered Lemnos for the purpose of preventing the nuptials of Jason, prince of Thessaly,

who is every moment expected to lead Hypsipyle to the altar. Learchus introduces himself into the palace gardens whither Hypsipyle soon afterward conducts her father, conceals him in a thicket and then retires. Their conversation is overheard by Learchus, who finds that Rhodope had not deceived him. He now seeks to draw away Thoas by a stratagem, and to take his place, with the view of carrying off Hypsipyle when she returns to seek her father. In fact, he addresses himself to Thoas, entreating him for his daughter's sake, to conceal himself elsewhere, assuring him that his retreat is already discovered; and after Thoas has withdrawn he enters the thicket in his stead.

The scene is changed. Eurynome announces to her countrywomen, who are assembled in the temple of Vengeance, that an armed man has been observed in the precincts of the palace; "but the Lemnian heroines," she continues, "have surrounded him, and, I doubt not, will soon prove victorious." It is Jason; and the next moment he appears, sword in hand, pursuing the "heroines" whom he has completely put to rout. He is astonished to find Eurynome and Hypsipyle reorganizing these Amazonian bands; he nevertheless accosts his betrothed in the most affecting and impassioned language, and is received with no less tenderness on her part. But his surprise is changed into horror when he hears of the slaughter which has just taken place of all the Lemnians, and of the assassination of the king by the hands of his intended bride. Hypsipyle herself makes a confession which, in the eyes of her lover, overwhelms her with disgrace. She had even taken the

precaution to place a disfigured corpse upon the couch of Thoas in order to deceive the conspirators. Jason hastens from this scene of blood disgusted at the unnatural wickedness of the bride whom he had flown to embrace.

The second act opens with the appearance of Eurynome during the night in the palace gardens, where Hypsipyle had concealed her father.

Eurynome.—Alas! whichever way I turn,
Some fatal object meets my eyes,
Kindling again my passions into madness.
'Midst these deep solitudes
I strive to lose the dread remorse,
Which still, where'er I fly, intrudes.
Tell me, ye awful scenes!
The spirit of my boy no longer wanders
Sad, unavenged, on the Lethean strand;
That now his mournful shade may pass the wave,
And taste the rest his mother's vengeance gave.

The son, to whom she here appeals, is at her side in the same retreat; but this piratical chief is, in truth, more cowardly than a woman. He shows himself with the utmost fear and retreats again at the least noise. His voice increases the anguish of Eurynome, who recognizes that of her son. Hypsipyle now arrives to withdraw her father from the place of his retreat, and she informs Learchus, whom she mistakes for Thoas, of the preparations she had made for flight. Eurynome hearing her intentions hastens to summon the Bacchantes, while Learchus, alarmed at the sudden flash of lights, makes his escape before he can be dis-

covered. Eurynome gives orders for the grove to be surrounded by the Bacchantes and for the retreats on all sides to be explored and set on fire, when, just at the moment she expects to stab Thoas, Learchus is brought forward and falls at her feet. This incident possesses a theatrical effect which would be striking had Metastasio employed it less frequently. The Bacchantes are supposed to insist upon the king's death, while Rhodope, still in love with Learchus, comes forward, under pretense of hastening his punishment, with the intention of saving his life. She contrives to lead Eurynome away, and orders her companions to make preparations for the public sacrifice, remaining unaccompanied to keep guard over Learchus. As soon as the women have departed she restores him to liberty. It may be here remarked that if the Lemnian women were to be thus easily imposed upon, Hypsipyle surely need not have invented so many artifices.

The scene again changes, and Jason is seen at sunrise on the seashore, at a distance from his slumbering companions. After a monologue, in which he reproaches Hypsipyle for her perfidy and cruelty, he falls asleep upon the ground, wearied with long watching. Learchus here approaches him, and beholds his rival at his feet unarmed and alone. He draws his dagger to dispatch him, when Hysipyle, suddenly arriving, arrests the blow, threatening to alarm Jason. She obliges him to deliver up his arms, but Learchus is revenged upon her by himself awakening Jason and crying out that he is betrayed. The Thessalian prince starts up, beholds Hypsipyle with a dagger in her hand

and doubts not for a moment that she, who had assassinated her father, is now aiming at her lover's life. In vain she attempts to exculpate herself and to inform him of the truth; Jason listens to her with horror and rejects her caresses with disgust. She is no sooner gone than Thoas, approaching Jason, convinces him of the entire innocence of Hypsipyle. Jason immediately rouses his companions. He swears to snatch Hypsipyle from the palace and from the power of these furies; to solicit her forgiveness and to take vengeance for the blood which the Lemnian women have shed.

In the beginning of the third act we find ourselves in a secluded spot, not far from the seashore, where Learchus is lying in ambuscade together with two of his piratical followers. Thoas, whose anxiety has drawn him out of the tents of Jason, is approaching, but Learchus, with his two followers, judging himself no match for the old king, dispatches his comrades for more assistance, while he attempts to amuse Thoas until their return. He pretends to make a confession and to entreat the king's forgiveness of his crime; and on receiving pardon he takes his hand in token of reconciliation. The next moment Thoas is surrounded by the pirates, and Learchus, suddenly changing his tone, calls on him to surrender. Such are these variations of fortune, called by the Italians "fine theatrical strokes." The language made use of in these surprising turns is imbued with the same defects; we have enough of spirit and of elevation of manner, but nothing natural and true. They are followed by the plaudits of the theatre; we admire and we recur to them, but the

frequent antitheses give them a peculiar air of affectation. Thus Learchus says to the king, who despises life:

Learchus.—Nay, these are dreams!
There is no thing so vile
But loves to live. 'Tis a deceitful wile,
A tale told only to the idiot throng,
Of heroes' hearts firm amidst utter woe,
And thine (I read thy soul) is trembling now.

The reply of Thoas is almost a parody of the above:

Thoas.— Are they dreams?
I know thou canst not be at peace;
For virtue with ourselves is born,
Whose love, though spurn'd, deserts us never;
And whips those faults, from which it fails to shield us.
It is Heaven's voice! and if we hear it not,
Woe to us; for the very worst of evils
Is when the sinner bears within his breast
The longing after good, the sense of right,
Even in his own despite.
I read thy soul, and know ev'n now it trembles.

Meanwhile Rhodope, who saw Thoas borne away by the pirates, and Hypsipyle, informed of the fact, have recourse to Jason's assistance and excite him to vengeance. The scene is altered, and we behold the seaport, where the ships of Learchus are at anchor. Learchus, with the captive Thoas, is already on board, while Jason, Hypsipyle and Rhodope appear in pursuit of them with the Argonauts. Jason wishes instantly to attack the ships of the enemy, but Learchus, standing upon the deck, threatens to dispatch Thoas with the

weapon which he holds suspended over the old man's head. He refuses to restore his prisoner until Hypsipyle shall surrender herself into his hands. This Hypsipyle, notwithstanding her own fear and the opposition of Thoas and Jason, resolves to do, and slowly approaches the pirate's vessel. Jason then observes Eurynome, who is in search of her son Learchus, and, seizing her, threatens to kill her unless Thoas is set at liberty. The two victims are trembling under the knives of their respective assassins, on each side of the stage. When this spectacle has been exhibited a sufficient time, Learchus yields and agrees to exchange Thoas for his mother; and, as if to carry improbability to its highest point, after expressing remorse and reproaching himself for this act of virtue, he stabs himself for the weakness he has shown and throws himself into the sea.

Few dramas exhibit greater study of theatrical effect than *Hypsipyle*, and if we except its total want of probability without requiring of the author to account in a natural manner for the incidents introduced, few, perhaps, will be found that possess a greater degree of interest. But the same theatrical surprises are repeated until they weary the patience of the audience. We see the dagger at the throat of a father, a mother, a son or a beauty; and the same laconic reply is given to all the finest speeches in the piece, "Approach, or he dies." We have also convenient liberators with the weapons which they have just snatched from the real assassins in their hands, and who are themselves accused of the crime; and mothers who, persuading themselves that

they are in pursuit of their worst enemy, find an only son in his place, but not until they have brought him into the extremest jeopardy. Such materials are the common property of Italian tragedy. The incidents and characters are already drawn out, and the situations capable of being transferred elsewhere without distinction of time or place, thus rendering the drama of modern Italy so easy a production that every troupe of players used to engage its own poet. Metastasio's characters are likewise brought upon the scene with more tedious repetition than even the incidents and situations of his pieces. A total want of rational interest and too great exaggeration of the different virtues and vices of the personages he displays admit of little variety in the poet's characters. We are never presented with any of those half-villains or half-virtuous people so frequently met with elsewhere. The author takes it for granted that one crime is followed by all the rest in the decalogue, and that it is impossible for a virtuous character to commit a single fault, insomuch that he equally fails to excite our sympathy in the transcendent villains and in those immaculate characters who invariably triumph over their passions after the struggle of a moment.

Dido Abandoned.

In his *Dido Abandoned,* which was his first acted piece, Metastasio failed to elicit the degree of interest of which the theme is susceptible. His Æneas is a disgusting character; but the charm of the versification,

even in this, his first attempt, had the effect of raising him far above his competitors. The favorable impression was increased by later efforts; and in 1729, his reputation procured for him an appointment by Charles VI as imperial poet at Vienna, in place of Apostolo Zeno. There Metastasio continued to reside, in the service of the court, until his death, at the age of eighty-four. Nine of his pieces, composed during the first ten years of his residence at Vienna, are held in much higher esteem than the remainder, and of some of these a brief description will be given.

The Olimpiade.

The *Olimpiade* is of a soft and impassioned character throughout; the style extremely pure; with little probability of incident, and little of real nature, except in the passion of love. The scene is placed amid the Olympic games, where the poet supposes Clisthenes, king of Sicyon, to preside. The king has promised his daughter Aristea as a prize to the victor in the wrestling match. There are two friends, Lycidas and Megacles, in love with Aristea; the former has had no experience in the Olympic combats; but the latter has frequently been victorious in the wrestling ring. Lycidas had formerly saved the life of Megacles, who now wishes to win the beauty for his friend, and in his friend's name. Megacles disguises from him the passion which he himself entertains for the fair Aristea; he enters the lists, is victorious over all competitors, and yielding the prize into the arms of his friend, pre-

cipitates himself into the river, to avoid seeing the object of his love in the embraces of another. The catastrophe is, nevertheless, brought about favorably for all parties. A fisherman snatches Megacles from the waves; Argene, formerly deserted by Lycidas, inspires him with renewed passion while present at the games; and Lycidas is finally discovered to be the son of Clisthenes, and brother to Aristea. Thus the two pairs of lovers are united agreeably to the dictates of their first passion.

In impassioned eloquence the *Olimpiade* probably excels all the other works of Metastasio. In the scene between Megacles and Aristea, in which he acquaints her with his triumph, but that he has triumphed for another instead of himself, and in which he offers the sacrifice of both at the shrine of friendship, the interest assumes a high and pathetic tone. The farewell of Megacles to the object of his love and to his friend, is expressed in the most eloquent and fervid language, the close of which falls into a sweetness of harmony beyond the power of mere human words to produce. Music appears to have lavished upon it the utmost tenderness of which the art is susceptible, and expresses the most delicate varieties and shades of feeling with an eloquence of which language can convey but a faint impression. The quatrain with which the air closes is a burst of grief which reveals the innermost recesses of a heart overwhelmed with despair.

Megacles.—This is the mystery—
You know the secret now—the Prince of Crete

Dies to possess you. He implores my pity;
He saved my life—how can I spurn his prayer?

Aristea.—You fought——

Meg.—It was for him.

Aris.—Ah! would you lose me?

Meg.—Yes! to preserve my honor, and remain
Still worthy of your love.

Aris.—And I must therefore——

Meg.—Crown the great work, most generous, most adored.
O Aristea, help the grateful throbs
Of my torn heart, and be to Lycidas
All thou hast been to me. Yes, love him, love him!
He is deserving of such infinite bliss:
We have been one in heart;
If thou art his, we do not wholly part.

Aris.—What have you said? Am I, indeed, so fallen
From my bright heaven of hopes, to the abyss
Of wretchedness? It cannot be. No! find him
Some nobler recompense; for without you
Life is not life.

Meg.—Yet must I say adieu.
Do not thou also, beauteous Aristea,
Tempt me to be a traitor to my virtue.
Too dreadful are the pangs of this resolve;
And now the least of these sweet fond emotions
Makes all my efforts vain.

Aris.—Alas! you leave me——

Meg.—It is too true.

Aris.—True, dost thou say? and when?

Meg.—This, this ('tis worse than death to utter it),
This is my last farewell.

Aris.—The last! Ungrateful!
Help me, ye gods—I sink into the earth;
Cold damps are on my brow; I feel a hand,
A chilly hand, oppress my very heart.
* * * * * * * * *

Meg.—Me miserable! what do I behold?
Her grief hath killed her. Gentle love, look on me;

Do not, bright Aristea, thus yield up
Thy nobler self. Hear! Megacles is with thee;
I will not leave thee. Ah! she does not heed me.
Are there more woes in store for me, ye gods?
Farewell, farewell forever.
And may the Fates be kinder
To thee, love, than to me!
Ye gods, preserve your noblest work below.
And the bright days I lose, on her bestow!
My Lycidas, O hear:
My fate would she discover,
And say: Where is he fled?
Then answer thou: Thy lover,
Thine hapless friend, is dead,
Yet no! a grief so bitter
She shall not feel. Oh, say,
He sorely wept to quit her,
And weeping, went his way.
O mighty gulf of woe!
To leave my love, my heart!
For evermore to part!
To part, and leave her so.

La Clemenza Di Tito.

Among the historical productions of Metastasio *La Clemenza di Tito* is held in the highest estimation. Its subject, with slight differences, is the same as that of Corneille's *Cinna,* describing a conspiracy against a generous sovereign, directed by a female hand. Vitellia, secretly in love with Titus, prevails upon Sextus to enter into a conspiracy against him, only that she may be revenged upon him for his preference of the charms of Berenice. Sextus is the friend of Titus, and has not even the shadow of a complaint against him, for Titus is the best of men, and Metastasio is an excellent painter

of those faultless monsters without a spot. Indeed, there is a certain effeminacy in the character of the poet, very favorable to the expression of goodness and tenderness of soul. Titus always appears with a gentle, confiding and even fondling manner; his generosity surpasses that of Augustus; it is beyond all limits, but it would produce a greater impression did it proceed from a somewhat firmer character, and if the dignity of the sovereign were allowed to mingle with the kindness of the friend. Love is always so far the acting principle of all Metastasio's pieces, that death nowhere appears under a more serious aspect than in the speeches of his lovers. They talk of it and menace each other with it incessantly. But in the midst of the agitation which this is intended to excite, we feel a comfortable conviction that all is not meant that meets the ear. The rage of Vitellia, the daggers of Sextus, and even the conflagration of the Capitol itself, have altogether such a tempered fury as will not suffer us to be really alarmed. In this piece, as well as in the *Olimpiade*, the grand struggles of generosity are repeated, until they weary the mind. Annius, a friend of Sextus, renounces his mistress Servilia in favor of Titus; while Servilia, on her side, renounces the throne of Titus for the love of Annius. The latter, having exchanged dresses with Sextus, carries on his robe the conspirator's badge, and receives the accusations of the object of his affections and of his prince, who take him for a traitor, without a reply. Sextus, who is, in his turn, discovered, is also silent, in spite of the most pressing entreaties of Titus, in order that he may not involve Vitellia. These two

incidents, however, have a more probable appearance than some of the preceding, and are treated in a very delicate manner. Sextus is condemned to death, and the following are the concluding lines addressed by him to Vitellia at the moment when he thinks he is about to die for her sake:

> If you should feel upon your cheek
> Some breath, like Zephyr, wandering nigh,
> Oh say: This is the parting sigh
> Of the fond youth who dies for me!
> Your lover's spirit hovering near,
> Shall find a balm for every tear
> And sorrow past, to hear you kindly speak.

When Titus afterward wishes to draw from Sextus an avowal of his fault, the gentleness of the one and the sufferings of the other are both finely expressed.

Titus.—Hear me, O Sextus!
Think not your sovereign speaks. He is not here.
Now open all your heart, as friend to friend:
Believe my word, Augustus shall not hear it.
Give me the reasons of your crime. Together
Let us find means of pardon—no less pleasure
To Titus, than to Sextus.

Sextus.— I say nothing!
My fault admits of no defense.

Tit.— At least,
Grant it, in friendship. I have not concealed
From you the nearest secrets of my state,
And surely merit some return of confidence
From Sextus.

Sex.— This is torment, such as never
Was known before: either I must offend him,
Or worse, betray Vitellia. (Aside.)

Tit.— Doubt you still?
Sextus, you wound my heart;
You outrage friendship, and insult the friend,
With these unkind suspicions. Think once more,
And grant my just request.
Sex.— What fatal sign
Cast its malignant influence on my birth!

This play is dedicated to the Emperor Charles VI, the same who, in the year 1714, delivered up the faithful and unfortunate Catalonians to the ferocious vengeance of Louis XIV and of Philip V, leaving thousands of victims to perish on the scaffold. Yet Metastasio says: "I had not ventured thus to describe you, were you not universally recognized in the character of Titus; and is the poet accountable for the strong resemblance? If you would avoid everywhere meeting with your own likeness, you must command the Muses, O victorious Augustus, no longer to sing the exploits of heroes."

Preeminence of Metastasio.

With a genius embracing so many opposite qualities, the most refined graces of Metastasio's poetry are united with false and exaggerated descriptions; the most correct and simple expression of the passions, with a total want of probability in the characters; and an inexhaustible variety in the details, with a tedious sameness in the ground-work of the plots. There is even a degree of tediousness felt in the mixture of the lyric and dramatic verses, which interrupts the expression of the sense, to give play to the imagination; but when we

consider Metastasio in his true character, as the great poet of the opera, he will always excite the admiration due to an author advancing, without a guide, in a new career, and leaving none who ventured to imitate him. Other Italian librettists may have rivaled him in tunefulness, or in the faculty of dramatic construction; but none in both respects; nor have any been able to impart such literary qualities to their compositions.

The musical drama is despised as a branch of literature, though some of the plays of Euripides and his imitators are almost in the nature of opera. The first and almost the only requisite is that the words should be a suitable vehicle for the music, and if there is a sufficient degree of skill in dramatic construction, poetry may be and commonly is dispensed with. It is the great distinction of Metastasio that he was not only a consummate playwright but a lyrical poet of the highest order, a perfect storehouse of melody; so that to him it was as easy to sing as to speak. Few writers have proved themselves such thorough masters of technique, and none have more thoroughly solved the problem of investing the amusement of the hour with abiding literary worth.

Metastasio lived to see the publication of forty editions of his works. He was one of the most rapid as well as the most pleasing of writers, often composing the entire libretto of an opera in twenty-four hours, while one of the best of his pieces, the *Achille in Sciro*, was written, set to music, provided with scenery and thoroughly prepared for representation within eighteen days. After squandering most of his patrimony he lived

in luxury from the proceeds of his works, but died in poverty.

Although the musical drama was unfavorable to more legitimate forms of the art, the seventeenth century was remarkable for its abundance of dramatic authors. Innumerable tragedies, comedies and pastorals were everywhere recited before the different courts and in the theatres of Italy; but none of them were comparable to those of a former age; nor are they, indeed, to be placed in competition with those of the eighteenth century. The tragedies are singularly deficient in their delineation of characters and of manners; the style partakes of the inflated taste of the age, and the action flags, while the authors seem to have hesitated between the pedantic imitation of the ancients and the mistaken route pursued by the moderns. Their productions are worthy of mention only as objects of literary research and curiosity; nor could they be represented or endured in any theatre, much less supply other writers with models or ideas. It seemed to be the poet's sole object to surprise the spectator by the brilliancy of the scenery or by a bustling movement on the stage, while probability was wholly sacrificed to the general desire of witnessing the appearance of monsters, combats and processions of chariots and horses. The comedies were, in the same manner, unconnected, insipid, low, and appreciated only by the vulgar. The pastorals became more affected, unnatural and dull, insomuch that the opera seemed the only species of theatrical representation at all esteemed, or which, indeed, deserved to be so.

III.

Eighteenth Century Drama.

The political situation in Italy underwent but slight improvement during the eighteenth century, and the little that was gained was more than counterbalanced by the habits of sloth and indifference contracted by the people. While the disposition of Italian potentates toward the cause of letters was more encouraging than in the preceding age, none of them were fitted, either by nature or training, to become patrons of literature. A few may be entitled to the credit of good intentions, but none can lay claim to a high reputation in the historical records of the times. A narrow spirit pervades alike their counsels and their administration. The exercise of strict control, an obstinate dislike to everything new, and a spirit of jealous disquietude and mistrust, pervaded all departments of the government, habituating the people to a state of passive obedience and restraint. The corruption of manners was the result rather of the dictates of fashion than of any particular excess of the passions; frivolity took the place of serious reflection, and long habits of indolence, enfeebling the mind, seemed to unfit it for serious occupation. Yet

there were not wanting a few spirits who lamented the situation, and had courage enough to attempt favorable change.

Martelli.

One of the first attempts to supply the deficiency, for which the Italians had been reproached, in dramatic poetry proceeded from a very tame imitator of French models, who could boast nothing of the genius they displayed. This was Pietro Jacopo Martelli, a professor of literature at Bologna, where he died in 1727. He took Corneille for his prototype in tragedy and Molière in comedy, but his talents were not above mediocrity, and he succeeded in preserving only the outline of their pieces, the combination of their scenes, and their theatrical regulations, while the spirit and power of their drama were beyond his reach. Contemporary with him was Faggiuoli, a Florentine, who also attempted to introduce a new style of comedy on the model of the French. The chief merit of his dramas, contained in seven volumes, will be found in their correct delineation of manners and in the ease and purity of their language, but the fire and force of dramatic genius are wanting. Even the finest passages possess only a negative kind of beauty, and, like Martelli, he failed to fill the void in the annals of the Italian drama.

Maffei.

The only tragic writer worthy of the name whose career belongs to the first half of the eighteenth century,

is the marchese Scipione Maffei, whose tastes and talents are displayed to the best advantage in the drama of *Merope*. Maffei was born at Verona in 1675, and, like most Italians in his profession, began to write verses at a very early age, producing, among other works, a poem in one hundred cantos on the harmony of human virtues. Consulting the interests of the theatre, he made a selection of the best tragedies and comedies written in the preceding century, but which theatrical managers had suffered to sink into oblivion. Jealous of the fame of the French drama, he produced a critique on the *Rodogune* of Corneille, including general strictures upon the taste of the French. Eventually he resolved, at the age of thirty-nine, to present the world with a model of real tragedy, such as he conceived it should be, and availed himself both of the Greek and French dramatists, without tamely following in their path. His play, brought forward at Modena in the spring of 1713, enjoyed a run altogether unexampled in the annals of the Italian theatre. When published it reached the sixtieth edition, and the autograph manuscript of the author is preserved as one of the sacred relics of Italy.

As the *Merope* of Euripides is lost to the moderns, Maffei may be considered the first author possessed of genius who availed himself of this very dramatic and affecting story, which has since been treated by Voltaire and Alfieri. Maffei piqued himself on the possibility of convincing the moderns that a tragedy might be written without a syllable of love, and without adopting the romantic taste which prevailed in the drama of France. He succeeded in exciting and maintaining a

very lively interest by the danger to which a mother exposes her only son, under the idea that she is about to avenge him. A few of the scenes are remarkable for the contrast offered between the fury of Merope and the resignation of Ægisthus, who is supposed to feel a presentiment that she is his mother. But the idea of Merope burning to execute vengeance, with her own hands, upon a prisoner lying bound before her, instead of awakening our sympathy makes us recoil with disgust. The anxiety of the spectators is well supported, and even becomes more intense from scene to scene, although it is rather that of an intrigue than of tragedy proper. Too many adventures, also, are interwoven, and sometimes have no real connection with the plot, while the incidents come upon us as if by chance. The whole is composed in blank verse, and the lines are equally simple, elevated and harmonious. Maffei, ridiculing the measured stateliness of French verse, wished to present us with a more natural and easy style, and perhaps occasionally ran into the opposite extreme of a trivial or prosaic mode of expression. This striving after simplicity, however, sometimes gives him language of a truer and more touching description, as when Euryses, Merope's confidant, attempts to console her, on hearing of the death of her son, by bringing to mind examples of fortitude under similar calamities:

Euryses.—Think how the mighty king, for whom all Greece
In arms arose 'gainst Troy, in Aulis gave
His dear child to a fierce and cruel death,
As the gods will'd it.

Merope.—But, O Euryses, the great gods had never
Required it of a mother.

With all its merits, Maffei's play shares the almost universal fault of modern tragedies based on classical subjects, it is essentially a work of reflection. Composed, as it was, for the purpose of rescuing the Italian drama from its degraded condition, it served to rouse the dramatists of the age to fresh exertions, and a host of writers took him for their model, none of whom achieved or deserved a lasting reputation.

Maffei also wrote at least two comedies, which do not appear to have met with much success. Yet they were far superior to those of the abbate Pietro Chiari, poet at the court of the duke of Modena, who, in the hope of producing a new era in the annals of dramatic art, produced ten volumes of comedies in verse. These were partially successful, being acted and read, as his novels had been read, chiefly by women—one of the strongest evidences of the corruption of the drama and of good taste. Their chief characteristic is commonplace affectation and an utter absence of interesting features, making them equally tedious and ridiculous.

Goldoni.

It was reserved for Carlo Goldoni to effect the dramatic revolution so frequently attempted by men whose talents were unequal to the task. Goldoni, a native of Venice, was born in 1707, and almost lived out the century, for he died in Paris in 1792. In his memoirs,

written by himself, is depicted with the utmost liveliness the born comedian, careless, light-hearted and with a happy temperament, proof against all strokes of fate, yet thoroughly respectable and honorable. Such characters were common enough in Italy, and it is somewhat remarkable that he should have been the only one of his many talented countrymen to win a European reputation as a comic writer. In tragedy other names have appeared since the death of Alfieri, but Goldoni still stands alone. This may be partly explained by the absence in comedy of a literary style which at the same time was national. Goldoni gave to his country a classical form, which, though it has since been cultivated, has never been cultivated by a master.

The son of a physician, Goldoni inherited his dramatic tastes from his grandfather, and all attempts to direct his activity into other channels was of no avail. Educated as a lawyer, and holding lucrative positions as secretary and councillor, he seemed, indeed, at one time to have settled down to the practice of law, but an unexpected summons to Venice, after an absence of several years, changed his career, and thenceforth he devoted himself to writing plays and managing theatres. It was his principal aim to supersede the comedy of masks and the comedy of intrigue by representations of actual life and manners, and in this he was entirely successful, though not until after powerful opposition from Carlo Gozzi, who accused him of having deprived the Italian theatre of the charms of poetry and imagination. Gozzi had obtained a wide reputation by his fairy dramas, and this so irritated Goldoni that he removed

to Paris, where, receiving a position at court, he passed the latter part of his life in composing plays and writing his memoirs in French. Notwithstanding that his works became extremely popular in Italy, he could never be induced to revisit his native land. In his last years he was afflicted with blindness, and died in extreme poverty, a pension granted by Louis XVI being withdrawn by the National Convention. It was, however, restored to his widow, at the pleading of the poet Chénier. "She is old," he urged, "she is seventy-six, and her husband has left her no heritage save his illustrious name, his virtues and his poverty."

Goldoni's first dramatic venture, a melodrama named *Amalasunta*, was unsuccessful. Submitting it to Count Prata, director of the opera, he was told that his piece "was composed with due regard to the rules of Aristotle and Horace, but not according to those laid down for the Italian drama." "In France," continued the count, "you can try to please the public, but here in Italy it is the actors and actresses whom you must consult, as well as the composer of the music and the stage decorators. Everything must be done according to a certain form which I will explain to you." Goldoni thanked his critic, went back to his inn and ordered a fire, into which he threw the manuscript of his *Amalasunta*. He then called for a good supper, which he consumed with relish, after which he went to bed and slept tranquilly throughout the night.

Goldoni's next attempt was more successful, though of its success he afterward professed himself ashamed. While holding a position as chamberlain in the house-

hold of the Venetian ambassador at Milan he made the acquaintance of a quack doctor who went by the name of Antonimo, and was the very prince of charlatans. Among other devices to attract customers the latter carried with him a company of actors, who, after assisting in selling his wares, gave a performance in his small theatre in a public square. It so happened that a company of comedians engaged for the Easter season at Milan failed to keep its appointment, whereupon, at Antonimo's request, Goldoni wrote an intermezzo entitled *The Venetian Gondolier*, which, as he says, "met with all the success so slight an effort deserved." This trifle, despised by its author, was the first of his performed and published works.

Goldoni took for his models the plays of Molière, and whenever a piece of his own succeeded he whispered to himself, "Good, but not yet Molière." The great Frenchman was the object of his idolatry, and justly so, for not only was Molière the true monarch of the comic stage but nearness of time and place, with similarity of manners, made the comedies of the French master suitable for imitation. By the middle of the eighteenth century none but literary enemies contested Goldoni's title as the Italian Molière, and this has been confirmed by the suffrage of posterity. *Un Curioso Accidente, Il Vero Amico, La Bottega del Caffe, La Locandiera* and many other comedies that might be named, while depicting the manners of a past age, retain all their freshness in our own. Italian audiences even yet take delight in his pictures of their ancestors. "One of the best theatres in Venice," says Symonds, "is called by

Goldoni's name. His house is pointed out by gondoliers to tourists. His statue stands almost within sight of the Rialto. His comedies are repeatedly given by companies of celebrated actors." As Cæsar called Terence a half-Menander, so we may term Goldoni a half-Molière. The Menandrine element in Molière is present with him, the Aristophanic is missing. Goldoni wants the French writer's overpowering comic force, and is happier in "catching the manners living as they rise" than in laying bare the depths of the heart. Wit, gayety, elegance, simplicity, truth to nature, skill in dramatic construction, render him nevertheless a most delightful writer, and his fame is the more assured from his position as his country's sole eminent representative in the region of polite comedy. "The appearance of Goldoni on the stage," says Voltaire, "might, like the poem of Trissino, be termed: 'Italy Delivered from the Goths.'"

In the outset of his career, Goldoni found the comic stage divided between two different species of dramatic composition—classical comedy and the comedy of masks. The first was the result of careful study and strict observance of Aristotelian rules, but possessing none of the qualities sought for by the public. Some of them were pedantic copies of the ancients; others were imitations of these copies, and still others were borrowed from the French. People might admire these pseudo-classic dramas; they certainly admired the more brilliant comedy of Goldoni, but the commedia dell'arte, or comedy of masks, is what pleased them best. To suppress the last of these forms the great comedian

devoted his utmost efforts, but though he succeeded partially, and for a time, the task was beyond him; for in the comedy of masks was the real dramatic life of the nation, and though, except in the hands of Gozzi, it never assumed the form of dramatic literature, it was transplanted into several European nations in the costume of harlequin, columbine and pantaloon.

Goldoni is considered by the Italians as the author who carried dramatic art in Italy to its highest point of perfection, and he possessed no common powers. He had a fertility of invention which readily supplied him with new subjects for his comic muse, and such facility of composition that he infrequently produced a comedy of five acts in verse within less than as many days, a rapidity which prevented him from bestowing sufficient pains upon the correctness of his work. His dialogue was extremely animated, earnest and full of meaning; and with a very exact knowledge of the national manners he combined the rare faculty of giving a lively picture of them on the stage. To this he added an exquisite relish and appreciation of Italian humor, which delights in amusing absurdities and in the genius of the buffoon.

If Goldoni's works were not so highly esteemed by foreigners as by the people of Italy, this was chiefly due to the want of intensity in the Italian character so essential for dramatic display. Among other nations the passion of love has always formed the animating principle of comedy, as well as of romance, being at once the most lively and poetical of all the social passions and that which gives the greatest development to char-

acter and the strongest color to life. But lasting and impassioned love, taking its source at once in the heart, the understanding and the senses, and combining their qualities in one; a love which founds its pleasure upon mutual preference cannot easily be supposed, in Italian manners, to aim at marriage as its ultimate object. Educated in complete seclusion from society, and obliged to maintain the utmost reserve, their young women are subjected to as severe an ordeal of public opinion for merely appearing in the world as for engaging in a dishonorable intrigue. They are thus, in some instances, induced to yield the rein to their feelings, not only in a very inconsiderate manner but with an impetuosity and imprudence equally surprising and revolting, and they often learn to think less of indulging a choice of affection than of obtaining, in a general way, an establishment in marriage. The latter they look forward to as the means of at once throwing off the restraints imposed upon them by their parents and by society, together with the affectation of a reserve, as little agreeable to their inclinations as to their taste.

The Twins of Venice.

In Italy it is made a point of duty in a discreet and sensible girl to accept the husband provided for her by her parents, whatever may be her objections to his mental, moral or physical qualities, and it is this kind of moral, always inculcated by the comic poet, which exhibits such an amusing contrast to our preconceived opinions on the subject. Thus, in Goldoni's *Twins of*

Venice, a subject treated by the dramatists of every nation since the time of Plautus, and the humor of which depends upon the mistakes arising out of the perfect resemblance between two brothers, we behold one of them just arrived from the mountains of Bergamo to espouse Rosetta, the daughter of Doctor Balanzoni. Now, Rosetta is a virtuous and prudent girl, whom the author delights to hold up as a model of duty to the young ladies of Italy. Her lover is an idle, ignorant, cowardly fool, a sort of harlequin, intended to support the absurdity of the piece to its close. Rosetta is at some pains to repel his impertinence and to keep him at a distance, although she frequently gives us to understand that his presence is not entirely disagreeable. The author rids himself of this troublesome hero by poisoning him upon the stage, and further justifies this summary mode of proceeding in his preface by the ingenious argument that, so far from exciting any tragic feelings, he only amuses us by the ridiculous manner in which he meets with his death. But the spectators are apt to view the affair in another light, and to feel that the levity of a buffoon, attending the commission of an atrocious crime, only adds to its horror. However this may be, Rosetta, after expressing a proper sense of despair, in the next scene accepts the hand of Lelio, another species of the genus fool, whose boastful falsehoods and absurdities had sustained the first four acts. In the fifth he has the option of Rosetta's hand, with a fortune of fifteen thousand crowns, and exclaims in the presence of the lady to whom he has been affianced: "She cannot but be agreeable; fifteen thousand

crowns would confer beauty upon any woman." Rosetta's consent is then asked, and she replies that she always takes pleasure in fulfilling the wishes of her father. Though such utter want of delicacy is too frequently met with in the manners of the people, we can hardly persuade ourselves that it is adapted to the stage.

Defects in Goldoni's Drama.

The female characters of most of Goldoni's pieces discover a similar want of delicacy in conduct and sentiment. Thus, in his *Donna di testa debile,* or *Weak-headed Lady,* Elvira, seconded by her friend, makes improper advances to Fausto, the lover of her sister-in-law; not that she cares for him, but merely because she does not wish her sister-in-law to be married before her. She also gives a very sharp lecture to her uncle for not providing her with a separate establishment in marriage. All Goldoni's Rosettas—and there are many of them—are sentimental characters; amorous, as young women are apt to be, but very obedient; anxious to be married, but with the greatest respect for paternal authority. His Beatrices, on the other hand, are of an opposite type, lively, impetuous and full of vivacity and frolic. Sometimes, indeed, waywardness carries them beyond all conventional bounds. We meet with them just eloped from their homes, pursuing their admirers in a student's gown or a military uniform, and after divers journeyings from place to place, always concluding their adventures happily.

Such personages have a very strong infusion of the

national character, no country in the world affording so many instances of the triumph of passion, when once the fair martyrs have overcome all obstacles in order to yield themselves up to its dictates; but the results as described by the romance are by no means probable. There is no truth in them, and it is prejudicial, in a moral point of view, to give an honorable culmination to a vicious and dissipated course of life, or to suppose that female virtue incurs no risk by an elopement from the paternal mansion. It may, of course, be said that regard to dramatic propriety, not always favorable to morals, would not admit of a less fortunate conclusion to the story. In truth the scenic heroines, by pretty general agreement, are supposed on the whole to entertain only virtuous sentiments, and this rule gives a singular air of incongruity to the representation of manners, which are very far from immaculate. The restraint imposed in Italy upon young unmarried women and the unbounded liberty granted to those who were wedded invariably led, according to the customs of the country, to the reign of love, subsequent to that of marriage. Love was then no longer confounded with the vague desire of a settlement in life, but sprung from intimate acquaintance, coincidence of feelings and a union of the affections. This, however, had a very unfavorable influence on all the relations of social life, on the peace of families, the education of children and the character of women.

Goldoni, though he called himself a reformer of the stage, never attempted to teach or enforce moral lessons. He accepted the life of the people around him,

and to it he held up his mirror. His business was to amuse his audience by depicting in a comic way their foibles, their faults, even their vices.

A Comedy Founded on Life.

The Curious Mishap, one of the most popular of Goldoni's plays, was founded on a story of real life which happened in Holland and was communicated to the author as a good subject for a play. The opening is the same as in the real story, with the details only slightly altered, and the intrigue is amusing, plausible and happily conceived. In the following scene Philibert holds converse with his daughter, while Gascoigne is packing the trunk of his master, De la Cotterie, a French lieutenant, wounded and a prisoner, who has been cared for in the home of Philibert. He is in love with Giannina, the daughter of his host, but Philibert intends him for Costanza, daughter of the broker Riccardo.

Philibert.—My daughter, what are you doing in this room?

Giannina.—Curiosity, sir, brought me here.

Phil.—And what excites your curiosity?

Gian.—To see a master who understands nothing of such things, and an awkward servant endeavoring to pack up a trunk.

Phil.—Do you know when he goes away?

Gian.—He intended going this morning, but, in walking across the room, his legs trembled so, that I fear he will not stand the journey.

Phil.—I think his present disease has deeper roots than his wound.

Gian.—Yet only one hurt has been discovered by the surgeons.

Phil.—Oh, there are wounds which they know nothing of.

Gian.—Every wound, however slight, makes its mark.

Phil.—Eh! there are weapons that give an inward wound.

Gian.—Without breaking the skin?

Phil.—Certainly.

Gian.—How do these wounds enter?

Phil.—By the eyes, the ears, the touch.

Gian.—You must mean by the percussion of the air.

Phil.—Air! no, I mean flame.

Gian.—Indeed, sir, I do not comprehend you.

Phil.—You do not choose to comprehend me.

Gian.—Do you think I have any mischievous design in my head?

Phil.—No; I think you a good girl, wise, prudent, who knows what the officer suffers from, and who, from a sense of propriety, appears not to know it.

Gian.—(Aside.) Poor me! his manner of talking alarms me.

Phil.—Giannina, you seem to me to blush.

Gian.—What you say, sir, of necessity makes me blush. I now begin to understand something of the mysterious wound of which you speak; but, be it as it may, I know neither his disease nor the remedy.

Phil.—My daughter, let us speak plainly. Monsieur de la Cotterie was perfectly cured a month after he arrived here; he was apparently in health, ate heartily, and began to recover his strength; he had a good complexion, and was the delight of our table and our circle. By degrees he grew sad, lost his appetite, became thin, and his gayety was changed to sighs. I am something of a philosopher, and suspect his disease is more of the mind than of the body, and, to speak still more plainly, I believe he is in love.

Gian.—It may be as you say; but I think, were he in love, he would not be leaving.

Phil.—Here again my philosophy explains everything. Suppose, by chance, the young lady of whom he is enamored were rich, dependent on her father, and could not encourage his hopes; would it be strange if despair counseled him to leave her?

Gian.—(Aside.) He seems to know all.

Phil.—And this tremor of the limbs, occurring just as he is to set out, must, I should say, viewed philosophically, arise from the conflict of two opposing passions.

Gian.—(Aside.) I could imprecate his philosophy!

Phil.—In short, the benevolence of my character, hospitality, to which my heart is much inclined, humanity itself, which causes me to desire the good of my neighbors, all force me to interest myself in him; but I would not wish my daughter to have any share in this disease.

Gian.—Ah, you make me laugh! Do I look thin and pale? am I melancholy? What says your philosophy to the external signs of my countenance and of my cheerfulness?

Phil.—I am suspended between two opinions: you have either the power of self-control, or are practicing deception.

Gian.—Have you ever found me capable of deception?

Phil.—Never, and for that reason I cannot believe it now.

Gian.—You have determined in your own mind that the officer is in love, which is very likely; but I am not the only person he may be suspected of loving.

Phil.—As the lieutenant leaves our house so seldom, it is fair to infer his disease had its origin here.

Gian.—There are many handsome young ladies who visit us, and one of them may be his choice.

Phil.—Very true; and, as you are with them, and do not want wit and observation, you ought to know exactly how it is, and to relieve me from all suspicion.

Gian.—But if I have promised not to speak of it?

Phil.—A father should be excepted from such a promise.

Gian.—Yes, certainly, especially if silence can cause him any pain.

Phil.—Come, then, my good girl, let us hear.—— (Aside.) I am sorry I suspected her.

Gian.—(Aside.) I find myself obliged to deceive him. ——Do you know, sir, that poor Monsieur de la Cotterie loves to madness Mademoiselle Costanza?

Phil.—What! the daughter of Monsieur Riccardo?

Gian.—The same.

Phil.—And does the girl return his affection?

Gian.—With the greatest possible ardor.

Phil.—And what obstacle prevents the accomplishment of their wishes?

Gian.—Why, the father of the girl will hardly consent to give her to an officer who is not in a condition to maintain her reputably.

Phil.—A curious obstacle, truly. And who is this Monsieur Riccardo, that he has such rigorous maxims? He is nothing but a broker, sprung from the mud, grown rich amid the execrations of the people. Does he think to rank himself among the merchants of Holland? A marriage with an officer would be an honor to his daughter, and he could not better dispose of his ill-got wealth.

Gian.—It seems, then, if you were a broker, you would not refuse him your daughter?

Phil.—Assuredly not.

Gian.—But, being a Dutch merchant, the match does not suit you?

Phil.—No, certainly not; not at all—you know it very well.

Gian.—So I thought.

Phil.—I must interest myself in behalf of Monsieur de la Cotterie.

Gian.—In what manner, sir?

Phil.—By persuading Monsieur Riccardo to give him his daughter.

Gian.—I would not advise you to meddle in the affair.

Phil.—Let us hear what the lieutenant will say.

Gian.—Yes, you should hear him first. (Aside.) I must give him warning beforehand.

Phil.—Do you think he will set out on his journey immediately?

Gian.—I know he has already ordered his horses.

Phil.—I will send directly to see.

Gian.—I will go myself, sir. (Aside.) I must take care not to make matters worse. (Exit.)

Phil.—(Alone.) I feel I have done injustice to my daughter in distrusting her; it is a happiness to me to be again certain of her sincerity. There may be some concealed deception in her words, but I will not believe her so artful; she is the daughter of a man who loves truth, and never departs from it, even in jest. Everything she tells me is quite reasonable: the officer may be in love with Mademoiselle Costanza; the absurd pride of the father considers the match as far below what his daughter is entitled to. I will, if possible, bring about the marriage by my mediation. On the one hand, we have nobility reduced in circumstances; on the other, a little accidental wealth; these fairly balance one another, and each party will find the alliance advantageous.

In the second act Philibert is outwitted by his clever daughter. Mademoiselle Costanza has called on her and is waiting till she appears.

Costanza.—Who would ever have thought Monsieur de la Cotterie had such a liking for me? It is true he has always treated me with politeness, and been ready to converse with me; but I cannot say I have observed any great signs of love. Now, I have always loved him, but have not had courage enough to show it. I flatter myself he, too, loves me, and for the same reason conceals it; in truth a modest officer is a strange animal, and it is hard to believe in its existence. Monsieur Philibert must have reasons for what he says, and I am well pleased to think him not mistaken, especially as I have no evidence that it is so. Here comes my handsome soldier—but Mademoiselle Giannina is with him; she never permits us to be alone together for a moment. I have some suspicion she is my rival.

Enter Giannina and De la Cotterie.

Giannina.—Keep your seat, mademoiselle; excuse me for having left you alone for a little while. I know you will be kind enough to forgive me, and I bring some one with me, who, I am sure, will secure your pardon.

Cost.—Though surely in your own house and with a real friend such ceremony is needless; your company is always agreeable. I desire you will put yourself to no inconvenience.

Gian.—Do you hear, lieutenant? You see we Dutch are not without wit.

De la Cotterie.—This is not the first time I have observed it.

Cost.—Monsieur de la Cotterie is in a house that does honor to our country, and if he admires ladies of wit, he need not go out of it.

Gian.—You are too polite, mademoiselle.

Cost.—I simply do justice to merit.

Gian.—Let us not dispute about our merits, but rather leave it to the lieutenant to decide.

De la Cot.—If you wish a decision, you must choose a better judge.

Gian.—A partial one, indeed, cannot be a good judge.

Cost.—And to say nothing of partiality, he feels under obligations to you as the mistress of the house.

Gian.—Oh, in France, the preference is always given to the guest: is it not so, lieutenant?

De la Cot.—It is no less the custom in Holland than in my own country.

Cost.—That is to say, the greater the merit, the greater the distinction with which they are treated.

Gian.—On that principle, you would be treated with the most distinction.

De la Cot.—(Aside.) I shall get into trouble if this conversation continuues.

Cost.—By your leave, mademoiselle.

Gian.—Why do you leave us so soon?

Cost.—I am engaged to my aunt; I promised to dine with her to-day, and it is not amiss to go early.

Gian.—Oh, it is too early; your aunt is old, and you will perhaps still find her in bed.

De la Cot.—(Aside.) Do not prevent her from going.

Gian.—He begs me to detain you.

Cost.—I am overpowered by your politeness. (Curtseying.) (Aside.) Her amusement is to torment me.

Gian.—(To Costanza.) What say you, my friend; have I not a good heart?

Cost.—I must praise your kindness to me.

Gian.—(To De la Cotterie.) And do you, too, own you are under obligations to me?

De la Cot.—Yes, certainly. I have reason to be grateful to you; you, who know my feelings, must be conscious of the great favor you do me. (Ironically.)

Gian.—(To Costanza.) You hear him? he is delighted.

Cost.—My dear friend, as you have such a regard for me, and take so much interest in him, allow me to speak freely to you. Your worthy father has told me a piece of news that overwhelms me with joy and surprise. If all he has told me be true, I pray you, Monsieur De la Cotterie, to confirm it.

Gian.—This is just what I anticipated; but as your conversation cannot be brief, and your aunt expects you, had you not better defer it to another opportunity?

De la Cot.—(Aside.) Heaven grant I may not be still more involved!

Cost.—A few words are all I ask.

Gian.—Come, lieutenant, take courage, and say all in a few words.

De la Cot.—Indeed, I have not the courage.

Gian.—No, my dear, it is impossible to express in a few words the infinite things he has to say to you.

Cost.—It will be enough if he says but one word.

Gian.—And what is that?

Cost.—That he really loves me.

Gian.—Pardon me; the lieutenant is too polite to speak of love to one young lady in the presence of another; but I can,

by going away, give you an opportunity of conversing together, and so remove all obstacles to an explanation. (Going.)

De la Cot.—Stay, mademoiselle.

Cost.—Yes, and mortify me no more. Be assured I should never have spoken with the boldness I have done, had you not led me to do so. I do not comprehend your meaning; there is an inconsistency in your conduct; but, be it as it may, time will bring the truth to light. And now permit me to take leave.

Gian.—My dear friend, pardon my inattention to you on first coming. You are mistress to go or remain, as you please.

Enter Philibert.

Philibert.—What delightful company! But why are you on your feet? why do you not sit down?

Gian.—Costanza is just going.

Phil.—(To Costanza.) Why so soon?

Gian.—Her aunt expects her.

Phil.—No, my dear young lady, do me the favor to remain; we may want you, and in affairs of this kind moments are often precious. I have sent to your father, to say I desire to have a conversation with him; I am certain he will come. We will have a private interview, and, however little he may be inclined to give his consent, I shall press him so as not to leave him time to repent; if we agree, I will call you both immediately into my room.

De la Cot.—(Aside.) Our situation is becoming more critical every moment.

Phil.—(To De la Cotterie.) You seem to me to be agitated.

Gian.—It is the excess of joy.

Phil.—(To Costanza.) And what effect has hope on you?

Cost.—I have more fear than hope.

Phil.—Rely on me. For the present, be content to remain here; and, as we do not know exactly when your father will come, stay to dinner with us.

Gian.—She cannot stay, sir.

Phil.—Why not?

Gian.—Because she promised her aunt to dine with her to-day.

Cost.—(Aside.) I see she does not wish me to remain.

Phil.—The aunt who expects you is your father's sister?

Cost.—Yes, sir.

Phil.—I know her; she is my particular friend. Leave it to me. I will get you released from the engagement, and, as soon as Monsieur Riccardo comes here, I will send word to her where you are, and she will be satisfied.

Cost.—I am grateful, Monsieur Philibert, for your great kindness; permit me for a moment to see my aunt, who is not well. I will soon return, and avail myself of your politeness.

Phil.—Very well; come back quickly.

Cost.—Good-morning to you; you will soon see me again.

Gian.—Good-by. (Aside.) If she does not come back I shall not break my heart.

Phil.—Adieu, my dear.—One moment. Lieutenant, for a man who has been in the wars, you do not seem quite as much at your ease as you should be.

Cost.—Why do you say so, sir?

Phil.—Because you are letting mademoiselle go away without taking notice of her—without one word of civility.

Cost.—Indeed, he has said but few.

De la Cot.—(To Philibert.) I ought not to abuse the privilege you have given me.

Phil.—(Aside.) I understand.—Giannina, a word with you.

Gian.—Yes, sir.

Phil.—(Aside, to Giannina.) It is not right for a young lady to thrust herself between two lovers in this manner; on account of you, they cannot speak two words to each other.

Gian.—(To Philibert.) They spoke in whispers together.

Phil.—(To De la Cotterie.) Well, if you have anything to say to her——

De la Cot.—There will be time enough, sir.

Phil.—(To Giannina.) Attend to me.

Cost.—(Aside, to De la Cotterie.) At least assure me of your affection.

De la Cot.—(Aside, to Costanza.) Excuse me, mademoiselle. (Aside.) I am exceedingly embarrassed.

Cost.—(Loud enough for all to hear.) Is it possible you will not say at once that you love me?

Gian.—(To Costanza, with asperity.) How many times do you want him to tell you so? Did he not say so before me,

Phil.—(To Giannina, with asperity.) No meddling, I tell you.

Cost.—Do not disturb yourself, mademoiselle; to see clearly here is not easy. I wish you all a good morning. Adieu, lieutenant. (Aside.) He is worried by this troublesome girl.

(Exit.)

Phil.—(To Giannina.) I am not pleased with your ways.

Gian.—My dear father, let me amuse myself a little. I, who am so free from love, like sometimes to vex these lovers. As it was I who discovered their passion for each other, they are under obligations to me for their approaching happiness; hence they may pardon my jokes.

Phil.—You girls are the devil! but the time will come, my daughter, when you will know how trying to lovers are these little teasing ways. You are now old enough, and the first good offer that presents itself, be prepared to accept it. What says Monsieur De la Cotterie? Am I not right?

De la Cot.—Quite right.

Gian.—Monsieur Quite Right, that is for me to decide, not for you.

Phil.—Are you averse to being married?

Gian.—If I could find a husband to my taste——

Phil.—I shall be pleased if he is to your taste—to mine he certainly must be; the fortune I intend for you will make you equal to the best match in Holland.

Gian.—The father of Mademoiselle Costanza says the same.

Phil.—Do you compare Monsieur Riccardo with me? or do you compare yourself to the daughter of a broker? You vex me when you talk so. I will hear no more.

Gian.—But I do not say——

Phil.—I'll hear no more. (Exit.)

De la Cot.—Ah, my Giannina, our affairs are worse than ever. How much better not to have taken such a step!

Gian.—Who could have foreseen my father would involve himself as he has done?

De la Cot.—I see no remedy but my immediate departure.

Gian.—Such weakness I did not expect.

De la Cot.—Then I may be forced to marry Mademoiselle Costanza.

Gian.—Do so, if you have the heart.

De la Cot.—Or shall the whole mystery be explained?

Gian.—It would be a most unhandsome act, to expose the shame of having contrived such a deception.

De la Cot.—Then do you suggest some plan.

Gian.—All I can say is this: Think no more of going away. As to marrying Mademoiselle Costanza, it is absurd; to discover our plot, preposterous. Resolve, then, on some plan to secure at the same time our love, our reputation, and our happiness. (Exit.)

De la Cot.—Excellent advice! but among so many things not to be done, where shall we find what is to be done? Alas! nothing remains but absolute despair.

Riccardo refuses his consent to his daughter's marriage, whereupon Philibert urges De la Cotterie to marry the girl without it, or if need be, carry her away to France. But the officer asks:

De la Cot.—With what means? With what money?

Phil.—Take this. Here are a hundred guineas in gold, and four hundred more in notes; these five hundred guineas will serve you for some time; accept them from my friendship. I think I can make the father of the girl return them to me.

De la Cot.—Sir, I am full of confusion——

Phil.—What confuses you? I am astonished at you! You want spirit; you want courage. Go quickly, and do not lose

a moment. May fortune be propitious to you. (Aside.) I am anxious to see Riccardo in a rage.

But instead of going to the house of Costanza's aunt, as Philibert supposes, De la Cotterie marries Giannina. Her father is prevailed on to grant his pardon. Gascoigne is married to Giannina's maid, who has acted as her accomplice, and everything ends to the satisfaction of all parties, except poor Costanza.

The Ostentatious Miser.

The *Ostentatious Miser* was written in French, as were other of Goldoni's plays, and resembles somewhat a modern French comedy of society. At the rise of the curtain, Count Casteldoro, the miser, indulges in a brief soliloquy, after which he unfolds his plans to his valet, Frontino, and his sister, Dorimene.

Count.—At last I am determined to marry. How! I marry! I, who have always avoided expense? I, who have detested all intercourse with ladies! Well, in this case, I am hurried away in my own despite. Ambition has induced me to obtain a title; therefore, should I die without children, my money is lost! and children themselves will but bring trouble! (Calls.) Frontino!

(Enter Frontino.)

Frontino.—Here, sir!

Count.—Hark ye!

Front.—I have found a tailor, sir, as you ordered me; and a tailor of the first notoriety.

Count.—Will he come directly?

Front.—Very soon. He was obliged first to wait on a duke. I was lucky enough to find him at home when he was about to step into his coach.

Count.—His coach?

Front.—Yes, sir.

Count.—His own coach? His own horses?

Front.—Beyond all doubt. A superb carriage, and excellent nags.

Count.—O Lord! He's too rich. Is he in repute?

Front.—In the greatest. He works for the first families in Paris.

Count.—But his honesty?

Front.—On that subject I have nothing to say. But why, Signor Count, did you not employ your own tailor?

Count.—Fie! My own tailor on such an occasion! I have need of several suits; and, as they must be grand, magnificent, and made to perfection, shall I, if any one should ask who is my tailor, shall I answer, "Signor Taccone," whose name nobody knows?

Front.—Then, sir, from what I hear, you are soon to be married?

Count.—So soon that this very day, and in this very house, I am to sign the contract: I have therefore called you to give the necessary orders. On this occasion I shall have a large company to dine with me, and must have such a dinner—in short, brilliant! grand! splendid! Not that I would satiate the indiscreet, or gorge my guests; but I would surprise by an air of grandeur—you know what I mean?

Front.—Yes, sir, tolerably well; but to do all this will not be quite so easy. I must inquire whether the cook——

Count.—No, no, Frontino; I would not have you dependent on the caprice of a cook. Take the direction of everything upon yourself. I know your talents, the readiness of your wit, and your zeal for your master's interest. There is not in the whole world a man like Frontino! You can work miracles; and on such an occasion will surpass yourself.

Front.—(Aside.) Ha! his usual mode. Coaxing me when he wants me; but afterwards——

Count.—Here is a list of the guests whom I have invited. My sister lives in this house, and my future spouse and her mother have the adjoining apartments. Here is a note of the other guests. We shall be thirty at table. Hasten to them

all, and get a positive answer from each, that, in case of refusals, other persons may be invited.

Front.—Thirty guests! Do you know, sir, how much a dinner for thirty will——

Count.—Perfectly; and will employ your discretion to combine economy and magnificence.

Front.—For example, you gave a supper a few nights ago to three gentlemen, and——

Count.—Ay, that was a trifle; at present I would be talked of.

Front.—But this trifling supper you thought so dear——

Count.—Lose no time in useless words.

Front.—You threw the account in my face, and have not yet——

Count.—Here is my sister. Begone!

Front.—(Aside.) O Lord! what will become of me? This time, friend Frontino, by way of recompense, prepare yourself to be kicked out of doors. (Exit.)

(Enter Dorimene.)

Count.—Good morning, dear sister; how do you do?

Dorimene.—Perfectly well. How are you?

Count.—Never better. Fortunate and happy man! I am to possess a bride of high birth and merit.

Dor.—Then you are determined in favor of Eleonora?

Count.—Aye, sweet sister! she is your relation; you proposed her to me, and I therefore have reason to give her the preference.

Dor.—(Ironically.) Her and her portion of one hundred thousand crowns, with as much more, perhaps, at the death of her mother.

Count.—You will allow, sister, that such conditions are not to be despised.

Dor.—True; but you, who are so——

Count.—I understand you. A man like me, having sacrificed a considerable sum to obtain a title, should have endeavored to marry into an illustrious family. I have thought

much, and combatted long this reigning inclination, but I know the prejudices of the old nobility; I must have paid dearly for the pompous honor of such an alliance.

Dor.—That is not what I wish to say.

Count.—I am determined to marry the charming Eleonora.

Dor.—But if the charming Eleonora should feel no love for you?

Count.—My dear sister, I do not think myself a person to be despised.

Dor.—But inclinations are capricious.

Count.—Has Eleonora told you she cannot love me?

Dor.—She has not precisely told me, but I have great reason to doubt it.

Count.—(To himself, vexed.) This is a little strange.

Dor.—Why are you angry? If you take in ill part——

Count.—No, no; you mistake me. Speak freely and sincerely.

Dor.—You know the confidence you have placed in me. Having discoursed together concerning this family, I wrote to Madame Araminta, inviting her and her daughter to pass a few days at Paris.

Count.—And they have been a fortnight with you. This I know must give trouble, and bring expense; and as you have done it for my sake—I—my duty—my obligations are eternal.

Dor.—By no means, brother. The expense is trifling, and the inconvenience small. I love this family, and beside being related to my husband, am greatly interested in its behalf. Eleonora is the best girl on earth, and her mother is no less respectable. A good heart, economical, and to the most exact economy she unites prudence and regularity of conduct.

Count.—Excellent; and so has been the education of her daughter. But now tell me——

Dor.—Sincerely, brother, in my opinion, Eleonora loves you neither much nor little.

Count.—On what do you found this strange suspicion?

Dor.—I will tell you. When your name is mentioned, she looks down and gives no answer.

Count.—Bashfulness.

Dor.—When she hears or sees you coming, she is in a tremor, and wishes to hide herself.

Count.—At her age that is not extraordinary.

Dor.—When this marriage is mentioned, the tears are in her eyes.

Count.—The tears of a child? Can anything be more equivocal?

Dor.—And though so equivocal and so full of doubt, will you dare to marry her?

Count.—Certainly, without the least difficulty.

Dor.—It seems you love her to distraction.

Count.—I love—I do not know how much.

Dor.—You have scarcely seen her twice.

Count.—Is not that enough to a feeling heart like mine?

Dor.—Ah, brother, I know you.

Count.—Your penetration is a little too quick.

Dor.—I do not wish that you should hereafter have to reproach me.

Count.—Yonder is Frontino.

Dor.—If you have business——

Count.—(With affected kindness.) Will you go?

Dor.—We shall meet again soon. I only wish you to think a little on what I have said, and before you marry——

Count.—Fear nothing, dear sister. Do me the pleasure to dine with me to-day. I will send to invite Madame Araminta and her daughter. We shall have many guests. The notary will be here after dinner, and the contract will be signed.

Dor.—To-day?

Count.—No doubt: Madame Araminta has pledged her word.

Dor.—(Ironically.) I give you joy. (Aside.) I will never suffer Eleonora to sacrifice herself for my sake. If I could but truly understand her heart—I will try. (Exit.)

In the second act Dorimene finds that Eleonora is not disposed to bestow her hand on Casteldoro, and the act concludes with a scene between the count and Araminta, Eleonora's mother. The count has meanwhile made a present of diamonds to Eleonora.

Count.—Well, Madame, Eleonora?

Araminta.—All, I hope, will be well.

Count.—Then I shall be happy; for health should be our first care. I have sent round to the guests, with an invitation to supper this evening.

Aram.—Thirty persons at supper!

Count.—I hope so, madame.

Aram.—Permit me to speak openly, and tell you all I think.

Count.—You cannot give me greater pleasure.

Aram.—Is it not extreme folly to assemble thirty persons, twenty of whom, at least, will make a jest of you?

Count.—A jest of me?

Aram.—Beyond all doubt. Do not think that I am avaricious; thank heaven, that is not my defect; but I cannot endure to see money squandered.

Count.—But on such a day, and under such circumstances.

Aram.—Are they your relatives whom you have invited?

Count.—By no means. A select company; the nobility! the literati! the magistracy! all persons of distinction.

Aram.—Worse and worse! Vanity, ostentation, folly! My good friend, you do not know the value of money.

Count.—(Smiles.) I do not know the value of money!

Aram.—Alas, you do not! Your sister made me believe you were economical; had I known the truth, I should never have married my daughter to a spendthrift.

Count.—So you think me a spendthrift!

Aram.—I first perceived it by the considerable sum you

threw away in the purchase of a title; which sacrifice to vanity has no beneficial end.

Count.—How? Are you not aware the rank I have acquired will impress a character of respect on myself, your daughter, and our descendants?

Aram.—Quite the reverse. I would have rather given my daughter to you as Signor Anselmo Colombani, a well-known merchant, than to the Count of Casteldoro, a newly-made nobleman.

Count.—But, madame——

Aram.—Your ancestors have saved what you will scatter.

Count.—Scatter! I! You are mistaken, madame; you do not know me.

Aram.—Oh yes, yes. I saw the manner in which, without any knowledge of diamonds, or asking the least advice, you were led away by the jeweler.

Count.—Oh, with respect to the diamonds——

Aram.—Oh, aye! I know your answer. They are to decorate the Countess of Casteldoro. And who is the Countess of Casteldoro? My daughter, signor, has been well educated, but with no such expectations. Everything has been done in abundance that could contribute to convenience, decency, and information; but nothing to pomp and vanity. The ornaments of my daughter will ever be modesty, obedience, and that self-respect which she could not but acquire from such an education.

Count.—But, madame——

Aram.—But, signor—I ask your pardon—perhaps you may think me too warm; but I see you hurried into a gulf of expense that makes me tremble. My daughter's happiness is concerned; I give her a hundred thousand crowns in marriage.

Count.—Am I not able to settle an equal sum upon her?

Aram.—Yes, at present. But wealth will diminish; and especially when we have the vanity to be profuse, grand and magnificent.

Count.—I once more assure you, madame, you do not know me.

Aram.—Signor, had you been a different person, I had conceived an excellent plan. My annual income is five and twenty thousand livres; I might have lived with you and my daughter, and the two families might have been one; but, at present, heaven prevent me from such a step!

Count.—Pray hear me. You mistake my character. Few people, indeed, understand economy as well as I do, as you will soon be convinced. I willingly close with your proposal, and——

Aram.—By no means! You try in vain to persuade me against conviction. Respecting my daughter—I have promised —we shall see—but for myself it is different. Not all the gold on earth should induce me to make such an arrangement with a man who does not know the use of money, but lets it slip through his fingers faster than flour through a sieve.

Count.—I never imagined I should pass for a prodigal.

But Eleonora is not for the count; she marries instead the chevalier del Bosco, son of a marquis who wins the hand of Araminta, on condition that she has carte blanche in the management of his estate. At the supper the notary appears, and Casteldoro, who had expected to announce his own marriage, invites his guests to witness the signing of a contract between the chevalier and Eleonora.

In an analysis of Goldoni's comedies it will be noticed how small is the share of fine feelings which they display. Indeed, the drama of this author is anything but sentimental. His heroes and heroines are not those of romance; he gives them their full share of human foibles, and delights to make us laugh at their expense; displaying the egotism lurking in their generosity, the interested nature of their friendship, the envy mingled with their admiration, and throughout all, the dull,

calculating and vulgar part of human nature. This he accomplishes with considerable address and wit, and with no slight knowledge of dramatic effect. He strongly excites our laughter, at the same time that we applaud the natural turn of the dialogue and of the characters. But this is not the sole object of comedy; for in real productions of art, something of a more ideal character is required, and where nothing of this elevated description appears in a comedy, we soon become weary of the narrow views and despicable opinions peculiar to the prosaic class. We begin to feel the want of a species of interest which we do not find, and to this aspiration after nobler sentiments and more grateful feelings may be attributed the revival of sentimental comedy, of domestic tragedy, of tragi-comedy, the melodrama and romantic comedy upon the stage of every nation.

With all his shortcomings, Goldoni has been universally allowed by the people of Italy to be the great master of the comic stage, and his productions, identified as they are with the character and manners of the nation for which they are written, were always received with enthusiastic applause. Frequently was the representation of his plays interrupted by repeated cries of "Gran Goldoni," which was caught up and reëchoed through all parts of the theatre. Yet his merits, however eminent in the natural and faithful delineation of manners, and in the strain of gayety that runs throughout, by no means convey the idea of grandeur or of transcendent genius. Goldoni was extremely provoked to find his pieces made a subject of parody by Count Gozzi,

and more so that these attempts had been received by the public with very generous applause, though bestowed less, perhaps, on the happiness of the parody than on the fantastic productions in which it was contained. This gave rise to a literary quarrel, attended by two very remarkable circumstances. Goldoni became irritated to such a degree as to lead him to abandon his native country; Gozzi introduced a new style of comedy, which for a time almost superseded the drama of his rival.

Gozzi.

The ascendancy of Carlo Gozzi is limited to the four brilliant years in which he carried all before him on the Venetian stage by his *fiabe*, or dramatized fairy tales, composed in the spirit of the *Commedia dell'arte*, but with a regular plot, capable of exciting strong interest. Goldoni, as the restorer of true comedy, had denounced the buffooneries of the old *Commedia dell'arte*, and Gozzi, who had himself cultivated that form, and whose preference for it was increased by his misunderstanding with Goldoni, determined to show its capabilities, and at the same time to ridicule his rivals, Goldoni and Chiari.

The Three Oranges.

In 1761 Gozzi placed in the hands of a company of players his dramatic sketch entitled the *Three Oranges*, leaving the subordinate parts to be filled in by the humor and imagination for which these actors were famous. Inspired by personal dislike for Goldoni and

Chiari, the objects of the parody, they played it with the utmost spirit. Its success was instantaneous, and fairly crushed Gozzi's rivals by the satire of the burlesque, as where the long journeys which Chiari's personages are supposed to perform, in the space of a single act, are ridiculed by Tartaglia and Truffaldino being propelled two thousand leagues by the devil with a pair of bellows, and then "sprawling on the grass at the sudden cessation of the favoring gale." The principal scene is where Tartaglia, after recovering from a long fit of melancholy, goes in quest of the three oranges preserved in the castle of the fairy Creonta. The fairy summons her dog, and tells him to "go, bite the thief who stole my oranges;" but the dog replies: "Why should I bite him? He gave me plenty to eat, while you have kept me here for months and years, dying of hunger." The fairy then turns to the rope at the well: "Rope, bind the thief who stole my oranges." But the rope answers: "Why should I bind him who hung me in the sun to dry, while you have left me for months and years to moulder in a corner?" Finally, the fairy bids the iron gate of the castle to "crush the thief who stole my oranges." But, says the gate: "Why should I crush him who has oiled me, while you have left me so long to rust?" During this dialogue the audience was listening in rapt attention and loudly applauding a tale known to everyone before. But the climax was reached when, Truffaldino cutting two of the oranges, there stepped forth two beautiful princesses, who very soon died of thirst. As Tartaglia cuts the remaining orange by the side of a fountain a third

princess steps forth, and to her he hastens to give something to drink; for it appears that, after many more adventures, she is destined to become his wife. Thereupon she is transformed into a dove before the eyes of the audience, and it is some time before she regains her natural shape. Not least among the triumphs of the play was that it drove Goldoni out of Venice.

The Fairy Drama.

Observing the use that might be made of the love of the marvellous, of deceptions and metamorphoses accomplished on the stage, Gozzi devoted himself in earnest to the new species of drama which he had created, selecting for the stage all the fairy tales that appeared to him most likely to produce a brilliant effect. He dramatized and gave them to the public, accompanied with such magnificence of decoration and equipment as won the liveliest applause, while the humor of the actors, and the animation which the author threw into these time-worn fictions, gave to them all the effect of tragi-comedy. In many of these fantastic creations Gozzi displayed the qualities both of a poet and a humorist, as in *Zobeide, The Lady Serpent, The Blue Monster, The Green Bird, The King of the Genii,* and others. He avoided personal satire, the better to sustain the legendary portion of his subject. He seems to have imbibed the true spirit of fairy stories, and if his plays show little resemblance to nature, they at least preserve the sort of probability we can expect in this form of drama. He divided the performances into

acts and scenes, writing in iambic verse the more serious parts, and trusted for extemporization only the characters in mask—harlequin, pantaloon and the rest. The scenes were laid in the Orient, where the marvelous needs only to be limited by the author's imagination, and the events are represented as occurring in modern times, in order to permit allusions to the manners, and especially the failings, of his contemporaries.

The more serious personages were usually placed in very critical circumstances, for the purpose of creating sufficient interest and curiosity, sometimes in the adventures and sometimes in the characters themselves. For the most part, interest is kept alive by one astonishing incident crowded upon another, keeping the audience always in a state of surprise and curiosity.

As an instance, may be mentioned the *Zobeide,* where a princess is carried off by a wicked enchanter, who, imposing upon her by his magic art, has inspired her with a passion for him. This enchanter, King Sinadab, never retains the same wife longer than forty days, after which he transforms her into a heifer, and carries off another, those who resist him being tormented in a dismal cavern with all the cruelties he can inflict. Zobeide has already reached the fortieth day, and Sinadab is resolved to destroy her. But, meanwhile, she has made an impression on the heart of Abdalac, the high priest, who is no less powerful as a magician than the king himself, and endeavors to make the infernal incantations of the latter recoil upon his own head. He reveals to Zobeide the character of her husband, and the fate which is in store for her. He shows her, among the

wretched prisoners in the cavern, her own sister and her half-sister, and the scene represented on the stage strongly resembles Dante's hell. One of these unfortunates is seen pacing the winding cavern with her head in her hand, suspended by the hair; at the bosom of another serpents are perpetually gnawing; a third is half metamorphosed into a monster, and all exclaim with horror against the cruelty of Sinadab. No longer under delusion, Zobeide tears the image of the king from her heart, but in order to escape his fury she is obliged to conceal from him the discovery she has made. Her father and brother arrive, with an army, for her rescue; when Sinadab, by a new enchantment, so far changes their appearance that, ignorant of each other's identity, they engage in single combat, and the father is killed by his own son. Zobeide still disguises her feelings, and is invited by Sinadab to partake of a collation, where he proposes to give her the fatal cake which is to transform her into a heifer. But she adroitly substitutes one of the cakes for another, and Sinadab himself is now transformed into a monster, whereupon Abdalac avails himself of the opportunity to break all his enchantments and to restore his captives to liberty.

It does not appear that Gozzi's plays were ever acted outside of Venice; nor do they, in truth, represent the national spirit of the Italian people. They almost seem to be of German rather than Italian origin, and, indeed, they have been repeatedly published and received with enthusiasm by the German people. Many of his pieces were translated, and acquired for Gozzi a reputation which has ever since made his name popular in Ger-

many. In Italy, however, the taste for fairy fictions appears to have spread no further than Venice, for elsewhere they were neither to be met with in the peasant's hut nor in the nursery. Gozzi's theatrical reputation continued for ten or fifteen years; but, while he obtained the applause of the people, all the men of letters attacked him with the utmost virulence and animosity. They ridiculed his fables, his transformations and miracles, and exposed the utter absurdity of the fairy tales upon which they were founded. Gozzi yielded so far to the outcry raised against him that by degrees he relinquished the kind of drama which he had adopted. He substituted romance in the place of the marvellous, and he succeeded in effecting, by human causes, a mixture of heroism and perfidy, those revolutions which are intended to gratify curiosity and to surprise the spectators. A fresh host of critics attempted to denounce this union of sentiment and buffoonery, of levity and gayety, of verse and prose; and very good reasons may certainly be alleged both in favor of and against a species of innovation which takes Gozzi out of the sphere of the imaginative arts. After four years of uninterrupted success he retired from the Italian stage, fearing to tire the public taste, and conscious, perhaps, that he had exhausted his vein. But his dramatic career was not yet ended, for in later years he composed tragedies, in which the comic element was largely introduced as in Shakespeare's plays, and when this mixture was condemned by the critics, his efforts were thenceforth chiefly devoted to adaptations from the Spanish. Throughout his career Gozzi had been a persistent

enemy of the imitation of French models which Goldoni brought into favor in Italy.

Albergati.

In order to encourage the drama, the duke of Parma proposed prizes for the best dramatic compositions, and at the annual meetings, which began about 1770, and were continued until 1778, several pieces of a superior character appeared, among which those of the marchese Albergati Capacelli, a Bolognese, were most in favor, one of these, entitled *The Prisoner*, winning the laurel crown in 1774. The peculiar qualities of Albergati's dramas, which are somewhat numerous, are the versatility, ease and variety which are everywhere observable, united to wit and much delicacy of sentiment. The play of *The Prisoner* is in five acts, and is written in verse. The interest turns upon the affection of a man of rank for a lady wanting the advantage of birth, and the sufferings which they experience in consequence of the undue exercise of parental authority. Albergati was one of the first writers in Italy who selected this incident for dramatic use, and he treated it with equal energy and sensibility. It was not long before he displayed talents, no less conspicuous, in pure comedy. A man of the world and conversant with the best society which Italy afforded, he employed the opportunities he thus enjoyed to observe life and to describe it with impartiality and truth. His *Ciarlatore Maldicente,* or *The Malicious Busybody,* is quite worthy of Goldoni in the singular correctness of its characters and in the spirit of

the dialogue, while in point of humor and elegance of style it may, perhaps, be pronounced superior.

Many pieces that may be classed as farce are from the pen of the same author, and are justly ranked among the most amusing productions of which the Italian theatre can boast. In these, Albergati had the art of uniting to national humor, and to the buffoonery of the old comedy, the elegance of manners peculiar to good society. The most successful, perhaps, was one entitled *Convulsions,* in which Albergati took occasion to ridicule those affected disorders of the nerves so fashionably prevalent about the end of the eighteenth century, and succeeded in deterring the voluntary victims from making them the pretence for further usurpation of authority over their husbands and their lovers; thus freeing the people of Italy from the new yoke with which they were threatened. Albergati was passionately devoted to the study of the drama, and was one of the founders of the theatre at Bologna, instituted with the view of introducing a more correct style of declamation among the players, by public specimens of elocution, in which his own histrionic talents were employed in throwing new light on the subject of dramatic composition. He distinguished himself, also, by his critical taste and acquirements, as appears from the remarks which he made upon his own works, and from his correspondence with Alfieri; and he undoubtedly deserves to be numbered among those who, without possessing any great degree of genius, contributed most to the improvement of the Italian theatre.

In consequence of the increasing influence of French

taste and of the superficial philosophy so much in repute toward the end of the eighteenth century, the drama of Italy was wholly deprived of its original character. The principles avowed by the French school had at first found no favor in Italy; they had been transferred thither without being applied or understood, and were by no means agreeable to the feelings and opinions of the people. The disciples of the new philosophy proposed to substitute idle declamation, and the most futile arguments and opinions, in place of the ancient prejudices, which they flattered themselves they had exploded. The plays of Beaumarchais, of Diderot and Mercier, imbued with the modish spirit of this philosophy, made a great impression upon the Italians; and the writers who appeared near the close of the century universally endeavored to imitate them.

Avelloni.

Francesco Antonio Avelloni, of Venice, surnamed Il Poetino, procured for himself a high reputation for comic wit, for which he was chiefly indebted to the parts borrowed from Beaumarchais. He directed the ridicule of the lower orders of the people against their superiors in rank, making philosophers of lacqueys, and exposing the various abuses of the established order of things to the public eye. The character of Cianni, in his *Magic Lantern,* seems to be formed upon the model of *Figaro;* but Avelloni is very far from displaying the wit and spirit which we meet with in Beaumarchais. Himself a comic actor, and as ignorant as the rest of

his profession in Italy, Avelloni falls into egregious errors whenever he ventures to lay the scene of the play beyond the circle of his own limited experience. The outline of his characters is good, and his dialogue excels in the qualities of nature, of vivacity and sometimes of wit. His choleric personages are admirably brought out, and he displays considerable skill in the humorous description of the passion of anger in all its varieties.

Gualzetti.

Of the sentimental pieces which attracted the greatest applause in Italy, several were borrowed from French, English and German romances. A new Werter appeared in the creation of Anton Simone Sografi, a writer of some repute; and a Neapolitan, of the name of Gualzetti, produced a series of three dramas founded on the history of the count de Comminges. Few pieces have been more frequently played, or received with greater pleasure on the Italian stage than these historical dramas. The second, entitled *Adelaide Married,* was a particular favorite, though subject to those peculiar defects of which the sentimental school has been long accused—defects arising out of a total ignorance of the national manners of other countries and of the laws of true honor. The count de Comminges contrives to introduce himself into the house of a lady of whom he is enamored, and, without seeing her, engages himself as a painter in the service of the marquis of Benavides, her husband, submitting to the greatest indignities, falling upon his knees when he is threatened with chas-

tisement, and begging his master will not, by dismissing him, deprive him of all hope of obtaining his bread.

Pamela is another story which has furnished the Italian dramatists with new materials for comedy, and Goldoni has drawn from it three successive plays, while Chiari and Greppi each produced three connected dramas, of one of which the scene is laid throughout in England. Tom Jones and Clarissa have also figured upon the Italian boards, as well as an innumerable list whose pretensions to English names and English manners would be quite as admissible among natives of China or Japan. The count of Belphegor, originally from the pen of Machiavelli, has furnished a tolerably good comedy; but it was here thought advisable to lay the scene in a country where such personages could be presumed to live at ease, free from the importunities of magistrates and priests. Geneva was therefore fixed upon; and it is at Geneva that the devil is supposed to arrive, provided with ample recommendations to the prince of the city; that he is likewise supposed to enter into the holy estate of matrimony, and, driven to despair by the bitter temper of his lady, to return to his ancient residence below.

Federici.

One of the most distinguished farce writers of Italy was Camillo Federici, a Piedmontese actor, who, it is said, owed his education to the Jesuits. He made many long tours with his company, in the course of which he obtained some acquaintance with the German theatre, more particularly with the drama of Kotzebue, many

of whose pieces he attempted to naturalize in Italy, with others from the French. But he rarely excites our laughter by his wit, or awakens our sympathy by his pathos. The chief attraction consists in the force of his incidents and situations. The dialogue is, for the most part, dull and monotonous, without being natural; the sarcasm is severe, and when he aims at sentiment he is often pedantic or affected. His plots, however, are frequently striking and new; and, in the conduct of his romance, the interest depends chiefly upon curiosity and upon humorous and unexpected surprises. One of the most popular of his productions is *The Pretended Men of Worth,* the subject of which, however, is a little stale. It is that of a sovereign arriving unexpectedly in one of the cities lately added to his empire to observe, incognito, the conduct of his officers, discovering their perfidy and selfishness, and rewarding each according to his deserts. Residing in a country divided into a number of sovereign duchies, Federici selected for his hero the duke of Burgundy, whom he represents as residing at Dijon, wholly occupied with the cares of state and with the promotion of his subjects' welfare. This hero, apparently of a most pacific disposition, is, we are surprised to find, no other than Charles the Bold. Federici appears to have had a very limited acquaintance with the history of other times and nations, for which we could have readily pardoned him if he had displayed a more intimate knowledge of the human heart. But his pretended men of worth are surely the most impudent rogues ever brought forward upon the stage. Besides having made all these villains boastful

and imprudent, Federici has fallen into the error of drawing the whole of his characters in chiaroscuro. They are all light or all shade; we find only very atrocious crimes or the most shining virtues. Thus seven monsters of iniquity and four perfect characters are contrasted, and among the last is a peasant whose good qualities are even more marvellous than the vices of the others. Here we behold good faith without a taint of suspicion, generosity beyond bounds and all the cardinal virtues carried to perfection. The sovereign, with the character ascribed to that rank by comic authors, is a model of perfect justice, of elevation of mind and of zeal in the cause of righteousness. At the conclusion he disposes of everything in a very summary and arbitrary manner, and the fortunes, the liberty and the lives of all personages concerned are regulated according to his good will and pleasure, and to the infinite satisfaction of the audience.

Rossi.

The popular admiration of plays of the Federici type long maintained its ground in Italy among those classes who are accustomed to feel no sort of interest in the regular drama, and who love to indulge strong emotions without asking themselves in what manner they are produced. But authors and critics of the better class set themselves against the sentimental style of comedy; many devoting their talents, perhaps with less success, but certainly with more of merit, to the species which Goldoni introduced on the Italian stage. Among

the most deserving was Gherardo di Rossi, a Roman playwright, who presented the public with four volumes of comedies and many very pleasing pieces in verse. In the former he has succeeded in giving a correct description of the characters and manners of his nation, as well as in catching the peculiar faults and foibles of the society in which he lived. We everywhere trace the hand of a man of taste, and of one possessing a familiar acquaintance with the world. In liveliness of imagination and in elegance of language he far surpassed his predecessors, but his satire has too much severity to pass for humor, and his characters are either too mean or too vicious to deserve our sympathy. To this must be attributed the little popularity which has attended his productions, although they discover greater powers of imagination and wit than those of many other comic writers.

Giraud.

Count Giraud, also a Roman, but of French extraction, pursued the same career in the line of true comedy. His dramatic talents display a curious combination of the qualities peculiar to the two nations to which he owes his birth, his productions exhibiting as much of Italian good nature as of the finesse of the French. His plots are conducted with a spirit and rapidity peculiar to the people of the South, while his characters, in the midst of the most ridiculous situations, always preserve a certain dignity with which French taste can never altogether dispense. Giraud, though his works were produced in the nineteenth cen-

tury, belongs to the school of Rossi and his contemporaries. His productions were received with eagerness by managers and audiences, even by such as refused to render justice to the merits of Rossi. Indeed, they were for a time almost the only real comedies on the Italian stage, affording an agreeable relief to the monotonous sentiment of other dramatists.

Pindemonti.

Still another author whose talents, neither of a strictly comic nor tragic order, were frequently employed for the theatres of Italy, was the marchese Giovanni Pindemonti, a native of Verona, but who first won fame at Milan. His chief productions consisted of four volumes of *Dramatic Compositions,* as he was pleased to style them, in order to avoid the frowns of criticism which might have assailed them under the title of tragedies; yet more than one of these have attained a reputation seldom awarded even to the finest of tragedies. Pindemonti is a complete master of dramatic effect; he seizes the imagination by the splendor of his imagery; he animates and takes possession of the stage, and he is, in almost every sense, the reverse of his great contemporary, Alfieri, whose productions will form the subject of the two following chapters. Alfieri sought to restore tragedy to its simplest elements of form and verse, keeping only one object in view, while Pindemonti strove to adorn it with circumstantial and outward pomp, with everything that can captivate the senses, and with such variety and number

of characters as contribute to render our impressions most complete. His more tender and impassioned feelings are delineated with much energy and truth, while he attempts to give expression to that love of civil and religious liberty of which he had been the friend and the martyr under the old government by presenting it with new life upon the stage. In this last point, however, he is somewhat verbose and declamatory, diverging into tedious and repeated speeches, which are not sufficiently charged with matter, nor very much to the point. The variety of objects which he embraces required more poetical powers to give them a picturesque effect, and in this, as well as in the harmony of his numbers, he is deficient, while marks of haste and obscurity, owing as much to extreme conciseness as to faulty construction, must be considered among the defects of this author; but these are amply redeemed by the interest infused into his subject, and by the originality of mind which led him to pursue a course before unknown to the Italians.

Ginevra of Scotland.

No single production of Pindemonti seems to have attained greater celebrity than his *Ginevra of Scotland,* borrowed from Ariosto. It exhibits a striking similarity to the *Tancred* of Voltaire, containing all the elements of chivalry belonging to the olden times. The revolting character of Polinesso, who introduces himself into the chamber of Ginevra, so as to be seen by Ariodante, whom he has placed in view, for the purpose of defam-

ing the character of that princess, and the meanness of Dalinda, who receives, in the dress of her mistress, the visit of Polinesso, and thus promotes the conspiracy, give rise only to feelings of disgust. The whole plot is altogether too improbable, while Rinaldo's protracted speeches give an air of tameness and frigidity to the conclusion of the piece. A few scattered scenes and incidents, however, are fraught with deep tragic interest and beauty, and we cannot fail to be struck with the character of Ginevra throughout the whole of the fourth act. Condemned and abandoned to her fate under the most suspicious appearances, she still asserts a pride and purity of innocence which support her father and dissipate all his fears. Ariodante arrives, in the same manner as Tancred, in the quality of her champion, clad in black armor which completely conceals him from view. The accused lady is then left alone with her true knight, who, though fully convinced of her guilt, cannot resist coming forward in her behalf, consoling himself only with the thought of dying for her.

Ginevra.—Since thou hast resolved
Nobly to risk thy name in my behalf,
Thou art, I trust, persuaded of the wrong,
False, shameless wrong, done to my virgin fame:
Never did lance grace juster cause than mine,
In champion's hand, and if Heaven do, indeed,
Prosper its righteous judgments in the strength
Of battling heroes, know thou shalt come forth
A wreathed conqueror!
Ariodante.—(Aside.) Ye gods! what boldness!
Ginev.— But 'tis idle here
To give such hopes a tongue. Now, noble sir,

Since ancient custom so doth authorize,
Let me avail me of these moments granted,
Meekly to beg one boon of my protector.

Ariod.—Say on.

Ginev.—I know the order of the king, my father,
Doth yield me up a guerdon to the conqueror;
Thine shall I be, so thou wipe off the stain,
The undeserved aspersion of mine honor.
I know, alas! thou may'st enforce thy wishes;
But oh! if thou be generous as thou seemest,
By all the warmest prayers by woman utter'd
In sorest need, I do beseech thee pause,
And spare what is thine own. Take wealth, take honors,
All the rich dower with which my royal father
Hath portion'd me; but leave my wretched self
Freely to weep; for know, I could not love thee.

Ariod.—How!

Ginev.— Nay, be not offended!

Ariod.—(Aside.) Shameless! Yet,
Yet loves she Polinesso. Listen, lady;
Know you what 'tis to love?

Ginev.—Alas, I do!

Ariod.—Then wherefore doth your guilty lover loiter?
Why leaps not forth his lance in thy defence,
For whom thou erred'st and weep'st?

Ginev.—Oh God! he cannot!
Lowly he lies in the wide waters buried,
A wretched prey to monsters of the deep;
Yet is there now a lofty spirit beaming
From out those mortal spoils, in the blest heavens,
Where all my love is garner'd. But, perhaps,
The fame of youthful years, the gallant bearing
Of his proud country's shield, of Ariodante,
O worshipped name, sole care and sole delight,
Are all unknown to you. Now, hark! He rush'd
And madly plunged into the waves. They say—
I know not—but they say it was for me.
As Heaven shall judge my soul, I do aver

I was not false—no! even in thought, I was not
False to his love. Oh, you would pity me,
Did you but know the mingled love and grief
That tear my heart, whose unstaunched wounds still bleed
With bitter memories of that one loved name,
Round which my bounden fealty clings till death.
Yet am I grateful for the generous aid
Afforded, for the sake of my fair fame,
Far more than life, worse than a burden now.
Should other means be wanting, yet a life
Of living death will kill, though lingering long.
Then, kind as brave, complete your glorious task;
Relieve my woes; snatch me from infamy!
Oh, fight and conquer! Then, most merciful,
Plunge your victorious sword into my bosom.

Ariod.—(Aside.) Eternal Heaven, though certain of her guilt,
What soul-subduing words! They look like truth,
And wherefore should she feign them to a stranger?

Ginev.—(Aside.) What is he murmuring?

Ariod.—(Aside.) It is most strange.
My heart is wrung with woe.—Ginevra!

Ginev.—Say
You grant my prayer—one prayer, for all my woes;
Leave me but be free!

Ariod.—'Tis granted—all is granted.

Ginev.—I thought no less. You have a noble heart,
And nobly have you done! Thus let me kneel
Low at your feet.

Ariod.—No, rise, Ginevra! Tell me,
Can you be innocent? Now, to your champion
Unfold your inmost mind!

Ginev.—You too! My champion—
Do you too doubt me?

Ariod.—O ye gods! what rage!
What anguish! (Aside.) Hark! who gave a cavalier,
At night, the meeting at her chamber windows?
Was it Ginevra?

Ginev.—May Heaven's lightnings strike me
To dust, if ever I did quit my couch
A moment, where I laid my virgin limbs.

Ariod.—I do believe her; for if this be falsehood,
There is no truth. Yet have I not had proofs?
Such proofs? Oh, misery! (Aside.) And do you say
You loved but Ariodante?

Ginev.—As alive,
I loved him always, so I love him dead.

Ariod.—Ungrateful! No!

Ginev.—What dost thou say?

Ariod.—Ye gods!
I shall betray myself; I cannot bear it;
'Tis death, or something worse than death! (Aside.)
Enchantress,
Thy spells are on me. I would disbelieve
What I have seen.

Ginev.—What is't that troubles you?
Why speak you thus?—Why cast such terrible looks
Upon me now, from those stern steel-clad brows?
Indeed, you fright me. Wherefore do you groan,
As from your inmost spirit, and stifle sighs
That seem to shake your soul? Speak!

Ariod.—It is nothing.
Nay, what you've asked I granted. Leave me now.

Ginev.—How can I leave th' asserter of my honor?

Ariod.—Away, away! you know not what you do:
Your sight is death to me.

Ginev.—Alas, what say you!
What phantom flits before me—things long past?
If dead things come to life—what hope? what joy?
That voice—those looks! Oh! tell me, noble warrior,
Art thou unhappy, like myself?

Ariod.—I am.

Ginev.—I do beseech you, let me now behold
Your features. Oh, for pity!

Ariod.—No, you shall not,

Till death hath waved his pallid ensigns o'er them,
When battle's done.

Ginev.—Are these your hopes of conquest?

Ariod.—Nay, I will fight; but victory crowns the just!
How may I conquer?

Ginev.—In the righteous cause!

Ariod.—I—no, I cannot.—What say'st thou? she trembles!

Ginev.—The innocent tremble not.

Ariod.—I am——

Ginev.—Who are you?
Quickly! quickly tell me!

Ariod.—I refuse no longer;
Ginevra, you will have it. Know——

(A trumpet sounds.)

Ginev.—That sound!

Ariod.—I hear—I come! Ginevra, fare you well!
To battle and to death.

It was the chief object of Pindemonti to place before his audiences the proud history of their country and to infuse fresh spirit into the drama of Italy by engrafting upon it the loftier character and more heroic manners of the middle ages.

The Auto Da Fé.

Pindemonti wrote also dramas founded on ancient classical subjects, most of them original and all treated with strong inventive power. But that which to Italy was most striking and new, as a stage representation, was the *Adelina e Roberto,* or the *Auto da Fé,* in which the assertion of religious liberty and the hatred of the dread tribunal of the Inquisition were clothed in words

that fell strangely in the Italian tongue upon Italian ears. The scene is laid at Brille, in the Low Countries, and under the government of the duke of Alva. The chief characters are Roberto de Tournay, condemned for two years to the dungeons of the Inquisition; Adelina, his wife, and his father-in-law, both arrested as guilty of heresy, merely for expressing compassion for Roberto. The bishop of Brille is likewise introduced, and tries to save them; but his efforts only compromise his own safety. There are also the members of the Inquisition, with all their paraphernalia of office. The scene, almost throughout, is in the dungeons of the "Holy Office," where the trials and all the preparations for torture are described with a realism that makes the blood run cold. The unrelenting sternness of the grand inquisitor and the milder character of the grand vicar are not painted in the colors of hypocrisy, but as though they were possessed with all the rage and cruelty of a blind fanaticism. Poetry is despoiled of her sweetest graces to give a more terrific expression of truth to the horrors of religious persecution. Indeed, we sup full of horrors, even to a point beyond what is admissible on the stage. The victims appear under condemnation; they arrive at the place of execution; the fagots are in readiness; the dreadful malediction is pronounced, and they are about to be delivered to the flames when the soldiers of the prince of Orange suddenly appear and restore the sufferers to liberty and life.

IV.

Alfieri.

During the eighteenth century, as we have shown, comedy had made very considerable progress in Italy. Among authors who wrote for the stage were several men of genius and not a few of more than mediocre ability, who gave to the theatre plays containing all the old Italian gayety. Tragedy, on the other hand, had made no perceptible advance. With the exception of Maffei's *Merope*, Italy had hardly produced a single play which was not forgotten a few months after its first appearance. So scarce, indeed, were serious dramas that managers reverted to the operas of Metastasio, which they presented without the music, for their text, partly on account of its length, was no longer suitable for musical composers. Yet Metastasio was still the poet of the people, and the crowded audiences which came to hear his plays, although they knew them already by heart, received them with undiminished enthusiasm. With women, and especially those of the higher class, he was especially popular; for they saw that his heroism had its origin in love, and that he gave a pure and noble direction to the tender passion. By

statesmen and moralists he was charged with exercising a pernicious influence on the character and morals of the people; but Metastasio did not write for statesmen and moralists.

Nevertheless, there were many who fully perceived the errors of Metastasio, who despised his effeminacy, who ridiculed his stage effects, his suspended daggers, his love confidants, and all the factitious system which he had introduced on the stage. Foremost among them was Count Vittorio Alfieri, the greatest tragic and satiric writer of his age.

Career and Character.

Alfieri was a native of Piedmont, whose people the Italians regarded very much as the Greeks of Philip's day regarded the Macedonians. He resembled rather an Englishman than a native of Italy, one of the haughty, eccentric, whimsical but generous type which is still accepted on the Continent as the embodiment of British national character. Of patrician birth, he was strongly republican in sentiment; an aristocrat, but with the strongest yearning for national liberty, he was somewhat of the mould of Algernon Sidney or Savage Landor; with a most disinterested love of country, yet arrogant, exacting and domineering; loving his fellow-men, yet always quarrelling with them. The *Autobiography* of Alfieri, or as it is more often termed, his *Confessions*, is one of the most interesting and also one of the most sincere works in all this class of literature. Judged by other accounts of his life and character, it "extenuates

nothing, nor sets down aught in malice." The picture is that of a man continually under the influence of pride and discontent, but one whom pride and discontent stimulate to lofty endeavor and noble actions. Vivid, indeed, is the description of his self-contempt for his wasted youth and his ignorance of the Italian language, the dialect of Piedmont being then the worst of all provincial jargons. Very instructive, also, are the details of his self-education in the dramatic art. The psychological portions are relieved by stories of his extensive travels, his numerous adventures, and his love affairs, some of which were not a little romantic—for however austere the drama of Alfieri, such was not his character in private life. In London, in 1772, he fought a duel, unattended by seconds, with the injured husband of Lady Ligonier, and after wounding him in the right arm returned at once to the theatre from which he had been summoned to the fray. Another adventure in Milan was rather whimsical than romantic; for, convinced of the worthlessness of his siren, he ordered himself to be bound to his chair until the craving for her company had passed away.

Alfieri's third escapade, which became world-famous, was the rescue of Louise von Stolberg, countess of Albany, from the drunken husband who maltreated her, Charles Edward Stuart, the pretender to the British crown. The attachment of Alfieri to the countess was no doubt sincere, as also was her own—at least during the time when he was the only resource she had in the world. The intimacy was at first platonic, and might have continued so but for the extreme brutality

of her husband, which compelled the countess, by Alfieri's contrivance, to take refuge in a convent, where she saw neither husband nor lover. Presently, however, the pretender's brother offered an asylum in a Roman palace, where the intimacy—no longer platonic —was renewed. After being legally separated by the king of Sweden, she removed to Alsace and later to Paris, where, Alfieri joining her, they lived together as man and wife until driven from France by the storms of the revolution. Their last days were spent at Florence, and here, while writing plays, Alfieri died in 1803 from the effects of overwork coupled with his extremely ascetic mode of life. It is said by some that he was privately married to the countess, but of this there is no reliable evidence. She honored him with a monument, sculptured by Canova, though it would seem to have been rather in honor of herself; for her own figure stands out in the boldest prominence, while Alfieri appears only as a medallion head in profile.

Influence on Italian Drama.

It is, in truth, remarkable that a Piedmontese, who found even more difficulty in studying classical Italian than Napoleon in learning French, and who possessed few qualities that were distinctly national, should have been the first one to give new life to the national spirit of Italy. Yet this he unquestionably did. He possesssed, in an eminent degree, what was deplorably lacking in the golden age of Italian literature—a passion for freedom and a hatred of tyranny which impart to

his works, however remote their subject from modern times, an air of indignant protest against the subjection and degradation of his country. In this feeling, as well as in his haughty and self-sufficing independence of character, he reminds us of the stoical Romans of the earlier empire, whose works his own resemble in declamatory eloquence and studied and labored style.

"Alfieri," says Matthew Arnold, "is a noble-minded, deeply interesting man, but a monotonous poet." In his tragedies there is a strong family likeness, and in all of them may be observed the "narrow elevation" of which Arnold speaks. But they are not, like others of the classical school, tame and frigid from over-precision, nor are they untrue to nature through servile adherence to tradition. Their dignity and nobility of feeling inspire deep respect; the author is evidently akin to the heroes he depicts, and in their place would have acted as they did. His genius did not lead him to the imitation of the Greeks; but his plays were rather such as a Roman poet might have written if he could have completely broken loose from Greek models. His themes represent some of the grandest subjects taken from history and mythology, and always with a predilection for the heroes of liberty. The same qualities are observed in his minor poems, where also may be noticed the "narrow elevation," with little of music, fancy or variety, but with strong feeling, expressed with remarkable energy, as in the following lines:

> **Was Angelo born here? and he who wove**
> **Love's charm with sorcery of Tuscan tongue**
> **Indissolubly blent? and he whose song**

Laid bare the world below to world above,
And he who from his lonely valley clove
The azure height and trod the stars among?
And he whose searching mind the monarch's wrong,
Fount of the people's misery, did prove?
Yea, these had birth when men might uncontrolled
Speak, read, write, reason, with impunity.
Not from the chair was cowardice extolled;
Not for free thinking would indictment lie;
Nor did the city in her Book of Gold
Inscribe the name and office of a spy.

An enemy to repose, and to a mode of life which had enervated his fellow-countrymen, Alfieri regarded effeminacy as a public crime, and blamed Metastasio more for having corrupted Italian morals than for neglecting the true canons of tragedy. As soon as the predilections of his youth began to calm, and he had discontinued traversing Europe, more as a courier than as a tourist, his first verses were dictated by indignation. He had an exalted idea of the duties and the dignity of man, an ardent love, not only of liberty, but of all the noble actions to which it has given birth. He knew little of European politics, and hence could not judge correctly of the government of any country, confounding the dissolution of all the bonds of society with the freedom after which he sighed; and he had an inveterate hatred of that system of tyranny in the governments around him which had degraded mankind. This, indeed, might be called a personal hatred, since he shared and felt more acutely than any other individual the humiliation which had so long debased the Italians.

Metastasio was the poet of love; Alfieri, of freedom.

All the pieces of the latter have a political tendency, and owe their eloquence and warmth to the powerful sentiment which possessed the poet and compelled him to write from the impulse of his soul. He did not possess the requisite genius for tragedy of the highest order. His vivid emotions were not derived from the imagination, but solely from the feelings. He did not change places with his hero, to be himself moved by varied impressions; he remains always himself, and hence he is deficient in variety of incident, and often degenerates into monotony; but this was partially due to the circumstances of his life and to his unhappy environment.

Before the appearance of Alfieri, the Italians were inferior to all other nations in dramatic art; but, ranging himself by the side of the great French tragedians, he shares with them the advantages which they possess. He has united the qualities of art, unity, singleness of subject and probability, the best features of the French drama, to sublimity of situation and character, to what was best worth preserving in the Græco-Roman theatre, and to the profound thought and sentiment of the English stage. He has rescued tragedy from the salons of courts, to which the reign of Louis XIV had restricted it; he has introduced it to the people, and he has given general interest to the most elevated of poetical productions. He has annihilated the conventional forms which substituted a ridiculous affectation for the sublimity of nature; the gallantry derived from the old French romances, which exhibits the heroes of Greece and Rome under a preposterous disguise; the honeyed

sweetness and pastoral languor, which, since the time of Guarini, gave to all the heroic characters on the Italian stage effeminate sentiments and manners; the affectation of chivalry and valor, which, on the Spanish stage, with its delicate and scrupulous point of honor, converts the loftiest characters into bravos, eager to destroy each other. The gallantry of romances, the effeminacy of pastorals, the point of honor of chivalry appeared to him so many masks imposed upon nature, under which all true feelings and passions were concealed from view. He has torn off these masks, and has placed before us man in his real greatness and in his true relations. If, in this new conception of tragedy, he has sometimes erred, if he has abandoned himself to exaggeration, and to a violence of passion natural to his own character, he has still effected enough to claim our admiration. The writers who have succeeded him and who have profited from the grandeur of his style, while avoiding his faults, sufficiently prove his influence on the Italian drama, and how highly it stands indebted to his genius.

Notwithstanding the entirely novel form which he has given to his tragedies, Alfieri is wholly Italian in his genius. He has sometimes run into extremes directly opposed to his predecessors merely because he had them alone before his eyes. At the time he commenced writing he was ignorant of Greek, scarcely acquainted with the ancients and a stranger to the French stage; but, during his travels, he had been constantly accustomed to see in the theatres of Italy and of other countries poor or indifferent plays, all in the

classic style. He never bethought him of any other kind, and, believing himself born under the legislation of Aristotle, did not dream of shaking off his sovereignty.

Trissino, in giving birth to the Italian drama by his *Sophonisba,* was the first imitator of the Greeks, although he was incapable of translating their true feeling and spirit. All the poets of the sixteenth century, composing rather in the presence of the ancients than of the public, had sought for their rules in the classic tragedies, and knew no other art than that of conforming to these models. The pedantic spirit of the age had given an undisputed authority to this system, and no one had sought, by analysis, to ascertain on what principles the law of the unities was founded. They were admitted as articles of faith, and the French themselves, who have always observed them with so much fidelity, have never regarded them with the subservience of the Italians.

Features of Alfieri's Drama.

Alfieri was of all poets the most rigid observer of dramatic unity, not merely the unities of time and place, to which he has scrupulously adhered, and which, implicitly observed on the French stage, have been wholly neglected on those of Spain, Germany and England. It is the unity of action and of interest which forms the essence of his treatment, and which is peculiar to him, although in all theatres, as well romantic as classic, a respect for this unity is professed as an essential rule of dramatic art.

Alfieri's aim was to exhibit on the stage a single action and a single passion; to introduce it in the first verse and to keep it in view to the last; not to permit the diversion of the subject for a moment, and to remove, as idle and injurious to the interest of the piece, every character, every conversation which was not essentially connected with the plot and which did not contribute to advance it. Expelling from the theatre all confidants and inferior parts, he has in nearly all his tragedies only the four persons essential to the piece, and at the same time he suppresses all conversation foreign to the plot. Thus he has rendered his tragedies shorter than those of any other poet; so that they seldom exceed fourteen hundred lines.

Alfieri completely banished the effeminate and conventional forms of Metastasio, which reminded him of what he most held in abhorrence—the debasement of his country; but he substituted nothing in its place. The scenes of Metastasio's plays may be said to be in the theatre, but those of Alfieri have no scene whatever, and where the chief passion is love of country he has deprived the patriot of his native soil. It may be remarked that every nation, and almost every tragic poet, has a different way of placing before the eyes of spectators events remote in time or place. The French writers adopted the simple method of transferring their tragic heroes to their own capital. If they describe the Greeks, all that is generally known of them is accurately and consistently painted; but for the rest, they represent manners as being the same in Athens as in Paris, and the court of Agamemnon does not, in their

view, differ much from the court of Louis XIV. The Germans have a different plan, and, in order to enjoy the performance, it is necessary to be acquainted with the history of the piece. They neglect nothing that will make the picture faithful and complete; they sacrifice the rapidity of the action, rather than allow the audience to remain ignorant of a single circumstance. The illusion meets us on every side; and the drama, the manners of which are truly national and unmixed, is a panorama where the eye meets nothing foreign to the subject. Shakespeare had a greater knowledge of man than of facts, and, in consequence, wherever he had laid the scene he created it, by the force of his genius, in exact relation with human nature, though this relation might be false with regard to the people whose names he borrowed; and the richness of his imagination allowed him incessantly to vary these creations and to conduct us perpetually into new enchanted countries. Lopé de Vega, Calderon and their countrymen always place the scene amid the ideal and chivalrous manners of the old Spaniards. It is not their real country, but that of their imagination, and that with which, of all others, they are best acquainted.

Changes Introduced.

Many changes were introduced by Alfieri in the staging and representation of his tragedies, and these will best be explained in his own words. "Here," he says, "will be found no eavesdroppers to pry into secrets, on the discovery of which the plot is to depend; none of

those personages who are unknown to themselves and to others, except such as antiquity has already presented to us, as Ægisthus in *Merope;* no departed spirits reappearing; no thunder and lightning; no celestial interference; no useless massacre nor threats of assassination, as revolting as they are unnecessary; no borrowed or improbable confessions; no love-letters, crosses, funeral-piles, locks of hair; in short, none of those idle stratagems so often before employed." He tells us, further, that he has made it an invariable rule to introduce the action with lively and impassioned dialogue; that, so far as was permissible, he has placed the catastrophe under the eye of the spectator, and terminated the action where he began it—on the stage. He takes to himself credit for having greatly diversified his personages, giving to every tyrant, conspirator, lover and queen an appropriate character. But this is more than the reader will be apt to find in his dramas, for monotony is their principal defect. Not only are characters of the same class mingled together, but even those of different classes bear a resemblance to each other, and all resemble the author. He was a man of too passionate a nature, too proud and independent easily to adopt the sentiments of others. From the beginning to the end of his plays he shows himself the sworn foe of tyrants, the enemy of corruption, and, we might almost say, the enemy of all established forms of society. As his style is always constrained and concise, almost to affectation, the expression of his sentiments, as well as the sentiments themselves, have a too frequent and close similarity.

But the most important change which Alfieri effected in the dramatic art of Italy was in style. All his predecessors, agreeably to the genius of their language, had been harmonious to an excess, and had indulged, to a fault, in the softness of Italian metre. They supported their conversations by brilliant images, and by ornaments almost lyrical. They were prolix even to garrulity, and they interlarded their dialogues with commonplace morals and stale philosophical reflections and comparisons. In avoiding these errors Alfieri fell into the opposite extreme. His four first tragedies in particular, *Philip, Polynice, Antigone* and *Virginia,* were remarkable for the excessive harshness of their style. They were the first that were published of his nineteen plays, which appeared at three different periods. Some obscurity and harshness are also found in the six following pieces; although the numerous criticisms which he had drawn on himself had determined him to recast his style. What he most dreaded was a similarity to Metastasio, and hence he studied to render his style hard and abrupt; to break the monotony of the verse, whenever there was danger of its degenerating into song; to run the lines into each other; to suppress all superfluous ornament, all figurative expression and all comparison, even the most natural, as laboriously as another would have studied to clothe his verses with poetic charms. He thus gives an idea of the bounds which he had prescribed to himself, but which he had far exceeded: "I may say that, with regard to style, my plays appear sufficiently pure, correct and exempt from feebleness, and that their language is neither too

epic nor at any time lyrical, except when it may be so without ceasing to be tragic. It hence happens that there are no similes, except as very short images; very little narrative, and this never long and never inserted where it is not necessary; very few maxims, and never spoken by the author; the thoughts never, and the expression seldom inflated; sometimes, though rarely, new words, in all of which we may remark that a love of brevity, rather than of novelty, has created them." Alfieri seems to imagine that he has rendered his language strictly tragical, because it is neither epic nor lyric and is free from all inflation. But tragedy has, at all times, been regarded as a poem, not as a simple imitation of nature, and should always depend on poetry for its rhythm, its images, its harmony and its colors. When an author renounces the language of poetry, he acts as a sculptor who clothes his statue with real instead of marble vestments. Harmony and the language of imagination have been too entirely rejected by Alfieri. In almost all his tragedies we find more eloquence than poetry.

Alfieri considered himself free from the charge of an inflated style, because he had no pomp of expression, no bombast, no extravagant images; but there is at least an affectation of style in sentiments that are harsh, constrained, exaggerated and expressed with a consciousness, sublime indeed, when it is rarely used, but affected when it is employed with too lavish a hand. Born in a country to which liberty was a stranger, and having neither shared nor known its blessings, this poet had formed to himself a false and exaggerated idea of the

manners, duties and sentiments of a citizen, among which, as he thought, were rudeness in discourse, bitterness of hatred, and a degree of arrogance which was very far from natural. He formed for himself an ideal world, agreeable to the peculiarities and defects of his own character. He is always sententious; he always attempts to be sublime, and his affected simplicity, laconic brevity and loudly-proclaimed sentiments cannot be considered as the true language of nature. Thus, at the opening of the tragedy of *Octavia*, Nero and Seneca appear on the stage:

Seneca.—**Lord of the world, what seek'st thou?**
Nero.—**Peace!**
Seneca.—**'Twere thine, if thou deprivedst not others of it.**
Nero.—**'Twere wholly Nero's, if by nuptial band**
Abhorr'd, he were not with Octavia joined.

This opening undoubtedly possesses beauty and eloquence, but not such as are suitable to tragedy; since the natural dialogue, when the situation is not one of emotion, should never present ideas or sentiments compressed into so few words, under a form at once epigrammatic and affected.

But with all his shortcomings, Alfieri may be considered as the founder of a new school in Italy. He there effected a revolution in the theatrical art, and whatever objections may have been raised by the critics against his poetical style, his principles have been, in a measure, adopted by the public. He effectually exploded the system of confidants. The repeated stage

tricks, the daggers suspended over the heads of hostages, and the passions of the opera dared no longer show themselves in tragedy; and Italy, at length, adopted as national that system of poetry, austere, eloquent and condensed, but, at the same time, naked, which her only great tragic poet has bestowed on her.

The French revolution was favorable to the fame of Alfieri. His dramas were printed and represented in countries where, before that event, they could neither have been performed nor published. Eighteen editions rapidly succeeded each other. Two large theatres were erected, one at Milan, the other at Bologna, for the performance of the tragedies of Alfieri, with that complete conception and love of the art which, he complained, could not be found among the actors of Italy, and of which he believed them incapable. But these men to whom he could never be induced to trust his plays, enlisted themselves under his banners and adopted his own ideas of the drama. It is related that one of them, named Morocchesi, entreated Alfieri to assist at a representation of *Saul*, which he wished to give at Florence. For a long time he refused, with marked incivility, declaring that it was impossible for Morocchesi to comprehend him, or do justice to so difficult a part. Finally, however, he yielded, and the actor so greatly surpassed his expectation that the author rose in the midst of the performance, and regardless of drawing on himself the eyes of the audience, encouraged the player by applauding him with all his force, crying "Bravo, Morocchesi!" A few years later these tragedies, which Alfieri considered to be so little adapted to common

performers, were represented by mechanics, bakers and tailors, the greater part of whom were unable to read, but had, nevertheless, succeeded in committing them entirely to memory.

Philip II.

The first tragedy composed by Alfieri was *Philip II.* It was a subject well suited to his genius, to delineate this tyrant in his darkest colors, and to describe the secret and disastrous passion of his son Don Carlos. Isabella appears alone on the stage, and in a passionate soliloquy reproaches herself with the love, which she conceals in her heart, for Don Carlos, while she is the wife of Philip. Carlos enters her apartments; she attempts to fly, and he complains, with bitterness, that, like the common crowd of courtiers, she shuns him since he has lost his father's favor. He implores her compassion, congratulates himself upon having obtained it, and thus finds consolation for his sufferings. Yet, of all his grief, he says the most severe is derived from herself.

Ah! thou art ignorant of my father's nature,
And may kind Heaven that ignorance prolong!
The treacherous intrigues of an impious court
To thee are all unknown. An upright heart
Could not believe, much less such guilt imagine,
More cruel than the sycophantic train
Surrounding him, 'tis Philip that abhors me,
He sets the example to the servile crowd;
His wrathful temper chafes at nature's ties;
Yet do I not forget that he's my father.
If for one day I could forget that tie,
And rouse the slumber of my smother'd wrongs,

Never, oh, never, should he hear me mourn
My ravish'd honors, my offended fame,
His unexampled and unnatural hate.
No, of a wrong more deep I would upbraid him:
He took my all the day he tore thee from me.

In fact, Isabella had at first been destined for the wife of Carlos. The king had encouraged their passion, but he afterward required that their sentiments should yield to his own political views. Isabella meanwhile represses the love of Don Carlos; she represents it to him in the light of a crime; but she is powerfully agitated, and when he asks,

Am I then so guilty?

she replies,

Would it were only thou!

This avowal is understood, and Isabella, unable to retract it, presses Carlos at least to shun her presence, and to fly; or, if flight be not possible, to follow her no more, to avoid further interviews, and, since their error has only had Heaven for a witness, to conceal their passion from the world and from themselves and to tear the recollection of it from their hearts. She is scarcely gone when Perez unexpectedly enters, the friend of Carlos, and the only man who, in this despotic court, entertains liberal sentiments. He is surprised at the agitation of Carlos, and begs him to acquaint him with his griefs, that he may share them with him.

Carlos for some time repulses his generous friendship, and advises him to follow the example of the courtiers, who all consider it a crime to be faithful to him who is hated by the king. Their conversation is supported, perhaps, with more monotony than true energy, by bitter invectives against the falsehood of mankind, the corruption of courts, and the debasing effects of tyranny. Carlos at length gives his hand to Perez, in testimony of inviolable friendship and as an earnest of his promise to allow him to share his sufferings, though he cannot disclose his secret.

The first scene of the second act, between Philip and his minister, Gomez, commences in a manner so laconic and sententious that it might easily degenerate into affectation.

Philip.—What, above all things that this world can give,
Dost thou hold dear?
Gomez.—Thy favor.
Philip.—By what means
Dost hope to keep it?
Gomez.—By the means that gained it:
Obedience and silence.
Philip.—Thou art called
This day to practise both.

In this manner Philip instructs Gomez to observe the queen during a conversation that he designs to have with her. He thus prepares the spectators to observe all her feelings, and he himself manifests suspicions which he is unwilling to reveal in words. Isabella arrives. Philip consults her respecting his son. He ac-

cuses him of the most odious treason, in having maintained a correspondence with the rebels of Batavia; in having supported them in their revolt against their God and their king; and in having, on that very day, given audience to their ambassador. But this is not the suspicion which dwells in his mind. His words, commenced in an equivocal manner, are artfully broken in such a way that Isabella may believe that he has discovered their mutual attachment. Isabella trembles at every dubious expression, and the spectator with her.

Philip.—And tell without reserve, dost love or hate
Carlos, my son?
Isabella.—My lord?
Phil.—I understand thee.
If thou didst yield to thy first impulses,
And not obey the stern behests of duty,
Thou wouldst behold him. . . . . as a step-dame.
Isa.—No.
Thou art deceived. . . . . The prince . . . .
Phil.—Is dear, then, to thee,
Yet hast thou so much of true honor left,
That being Philip's wife, that Philip's son
Thou lov'st with love maternal.
Isa.—Thou alone
Art law to all my thoughts: thou lovest him;
At least I deem so; and e'en so I love him.
Phil.—Since thy well-regulated, noble heart,
Beholds not Carlos with a step-dame's thought,
Nor blind instinct of maternal fondness,
I choose thee for that Carlos as a judge.
Isa.—Me?
Phil.—Thou hast heard it.

Philip then acquaints Isabella with the enormity of Carlos' guilt. Yet, when the crime of the prince is

explicitly declared, she undertakes his defence with noble eloquence and courage. The king appears to be convinced; he sends for Carlos, speaks to him of the affection of the queen, the maternal affection, that had led her to undertake his defence; he seems even to be aware of their interview in the first act; but, after having alarmed them both, he dismisses them with an apparent return of kindness, and advises them to see each other frequently. This double examination is terminated by a scene between Philip and Gomez.

Philip.—Heard'st thou?
Gomez.— I heard.
Phil.— Sawest thou?
Gom.— I saw.
Phil.—Oh rage!
Then, then, suspicion——
Gom.— Now is certainty.
Phil.—And Philip yet is unrevenged!
Gom.— Reflect——
Phil.—I have reflected. Follow thou my footsteps.

Carlos, who well knows his father's character, is alarmed at the sympathy which he has manifested, and, above all, at his kindness, which with him is always the harbinger of a more terrible hatred. He seeks an interview with the queen. He communicates to her his fears at the commencement of the third act, and he conjures her never to speak of him again to the king. The queen cannot believe him; she retires; and Gomez, entering, congratulates Carlos on being again received into favor by the king, professes his devotion to him

and tenders his services; but Carlos turns his back on him, and withdraws without deigning to reply. Philip then, in the same salon, assembles a council. He appears, followed by his guards, by several counsellors of state, who are silent, by Perez, and by Lionardo, who doubtless was intended by the author for the grand inquisitor, but to whom he has not given that title. Philip, in a crafty discourse, informs his council that he has assembled them to judge his son. He then accuses Carlos of having attempted to assassinate him, and says that the prince had approached him from behind, his sword raised to strike him, when a cry from one of his courtiers put him to flight. Gomez supports the accusation; he produces intercepted letters of the prince, which he pretends afford proofs of a treasonable correspondence with France and with the revolted Hollanders; and he concludes by adjudging Don Carlos to death. Lionardo follows, and, in a hypocritical and ferocious speech, charges Carlos with heresy and impiety, and requires the king to lend his arm in avenging the cause of offended Heaven. Perez then speaks, and triumphantly exculpates his friend. He easily proves that all the accusations are feigned, and he does not suffer a doubt to remain on the mind of any present; but he addresses the king himself and his counsellors with an arrogance which Philip would not permit, and in the character of Perez we plainly recognize the author himself. All the characters are highly exaggerated, and the scene of the council, although the speeches are written with great eloquence, is marred by its want of probability. Philip orders his advisers to pass judgment on

his son, and exasperated with Perez, exclaims, when alone:

> **And can a soul so formed**
> **Spring where I reign, or where I reign, exist?**

At the beginning of the fourth act Carlos expects a confidant of the queen, but she does not appear. Instead comes the king, preceded by his guards. It is night, and Carlos, seeing the soldiers approach, draws his sword to defend himself, but replaces it when he sees his father. The king accuses him of having raised his arm against him, and a violent altercation ensues, in which Carlos uses the most violent and bitter language, such as Alfieri always assigns to the enemies of tyrants, and which no tyrant would tolerate. Philip orders his son to be arrested and conducted to a dungeon; but as this had already been ordered by the council, nothing is gained by the quarrel, and it leads to no result.

While Carlos is being led to prison, Isabella enters. She is alarmed, and Philip increases her fears by his equivocal answers respecting the prince, her own remarks causing her to be further compromised. She fears that her attachment has not escaped the observation of the tyrant, and that she may have said too much, and so betrayed herself. When she is left alone, Gomez enters, as he carries to the king the sentence of the council, which has condemned his son to death. He communicates his message to the queen; he gains her confidence by compassionating the prince, and leads her on to manifest the deep interest which she feels for

him. In turn, he unveils the atrocious character of Philip; he leaves no doubt of the innocence of Carlos; he promises to admit her into the prison, and though we are aware that Gomez is not likely to sacrifice the interests of Philip, except to draw the queen into a confession, there is yet a revival of hope which supports the interest of the play.

The fifth act takes place in the dungeon. Carlos is there alone, awaiting death with constancy. His only fear is that his father should have any suspicion of his love for Isabella, for his words and looks have alarmed him. The queen herself suddenly enters, and informs the prince what his fate will be if he does not fly; but Gomez, she tells him, has arranged for his escape, and by his aid she has obtained admission to the prison-house. Carlos then sees the abyss into which she has fallen, in common with himself, and thus addresses her:

> Incautious queen!
> Thou art too credulous. What hast thou done?
> Why didst thou trust to such a feigned compassion?
> Of the impious king, most impious minister,
> If he spoke truth, 'twas with the truth to cheat thee.

He entreats her to fly while yet there is time, to save her honor and to remove all pretext for the ferocious vengeance of the king. But while she is hesitating Philip appears. He expresses a savage joy at having them both completely in his power. Without their knowledge he has become acquainted with their passion from its commencement, and has observed its progress. His jealousy is not of the heart, but of offended pride,

and this he openly avows. Carlos attempts to justify Isabella, but she admits no excuse, provokes Philip by exasperating language and asks for death as a welcome release, Alfieri putting into her mouth his own sentiments and expressions of hatred. And now Gomez enters, bearing a cup of poison and a dagger still reeking with the blood of Perez. Philip offers the two lovers their choice between the dagger and the bowl. Carlos chooses the dagger and strikes himself a mortal blow. Isabella congratulates herself that she is about to die, whereupon Philip, to punish her the more, condemns her to life; but she snatches from the king his own poniard and stabs herself to the heart. This stage trick is unworthy of Alfieri, and is also very improbable, for the king's poniard, if he carried one, would have been fastened to his girdle or hidden by the folds of his dress.

Alfieri paints in the most sombre colors the profound dissimulation of the Spanish monarch, throwing a veil over his councils and his policy, and conducting him to the close of the tragedy without his revealing to anyone his secret thoughts. It is a master-stroke to assign a confidant to Philip, to whom he communicates nothing, even at the moment when he calls him to his councils. Extremely effective, also, is the silent concert between Gomez, Lionardo and the king, in the perpetration of the crime. Very different is Schiller's handling of the subject in his *Don Carlos,* where he describes Philip as possessed of an openness of heart which wanted only the element of truth to make it interesting, but was very far removed from the real char-

acter of that monarch. He deprives the king of all the terror derived from the dark, impenetrable silence with which he invests himself in Alfieri's version.

A Literary Epoch.

The publication of Alfieri's four tragedies marks an epoch in the literary annals of Italy. Before their appearance, the people, content with their languid love plots and effeminate plays, considered the rules of dramatic composition firmly established, attributing the weariness they felt during performances which had no real attractions, to lack of dramatic talent in the authors, and not to false ideas of art. Alfieri threw off the yoke, and every high-minded Italian was united with him in bonds of mutual sympathy. Thus was the nobler species of tragedy mingled with the love of glory and liberty. The theatre, which had so long been considered the school of intrigue, of effeminacy and servility, was now regarded by the cultured classes as the nurse of mental vigor, of honor and public virtue, and no longer were they humiliated by the marked inferiority of their dramatists to those of other nations. All united in admiring the elevation, the nobleness and energy of Alfieri's sentiments, and the expression of opinions, which had before been banished from Italy, burst forth like the long-suppressed voice of public feeling. Even within the narrower boundaries of the critical art we find a variety and profundity of knowledge displayed by men whose talents and acquirements had been hitherto unknown, and who would never have been

recognized unless some great genius like Alfieri had prepared the way for them.

The labors of these critics produced an effect on Alfieri which is manifested in his subsequent works. His four first tragedies were only a small portion of those that remained in his desk, and at three different periods were successively submitted to the public. In the interval between their publication he observed the general impression which they produced, and with the assistance of some of his friends performed the dramas himself, exposing them, by every means in his power, to the test of theatrical representation. He gradually reformed his style and adapted his compositions to the general taste. His dramas were thus distributed into three classes, distinguished by the period of their publication, as well as by the various alterations which they had undergone in consequence of changes in the author's style and system.

Virginia.

Philip II was published in 1783, together with *Polynices,* with its sequel, *Antigone* and *Virginia.* The three dramas, while displaying beauties of the first order, have, in common with *Philip,* a certain hardness of style, and exhibit traces of the author's original acerbity, notwithstanding all the pains which he took to correct that fault in later editions. They resemble each other still more in the writer's obstinate attachment to his system, in the stiffness of the action, in the bitterness of the sentiments and in the baldness both

of the action and the poetry. In the last of them the attachment of Alfieri to the laws of unity led him into a strange error. The murder of Virginia by her father arouses the people, and at the same time enrages Appius Claudius. The people cry to arms, and exclaim: "Appius is a tyrant—let him perish!" Alfieri, thinking that his tragedy, being entitled *Virginia,* necessarily terminated with the death of his heroine, lets the curtain drop upon the people and the lictors in the midst of the conflict, so that the audience is ignorant of the result, and whether Appius or the people triumph. To leave any action unfinished at the conclusion of a drama is a gross violation of the unity, for it induces every one to believe that such action was totally independent of it. The rigorous notions which induced the author to let the curtain fall exactly ten lines after the death of Virginia are still more out of place, when we consider that Appius is almost as important a personage as she is, and that his destruction, by which Virginia is to be avenged, completes the essential action of the poem.

Agamemnon.

Among the tragedies of the second period may be selected the *Agamemnon,* a play with only four characters, and differing essentially in treatment from the drama of Æschylus. The scene, which is laid in the palace of Argos, opens with a very beautiful soliloquy of Ægisthus, who imagines himself pursued by the shade of Thyestes, demanding vengeance. This he promises. Born in shame, the offspring of infamy and

incest, he believes himself called upon by destiny to commit the crime. Hour after hour he awaits the return of the conqueror of Troy, and he promises the shade of his father to immolate him and his family. Clytemnestra seeks him, wishing to divert those painful thoughts which are so plainly depicted on his countenance. Ægisthus only speaks to her of his approaching departure and of the necessity of avoiding the sight of the son of Atreus, the enemy of his race. He can bear neither his anger nor his contempt, and to the one or the other he knows that he must be exposed. He thus wounds the pride which Clytemnestra feels in the object of her love, and incites and directs against Agamemnon the irritation of his delirious spouse. Clytemnestra at last beholds in Agamemnon only the murderer of Iphigenia. She calls to mind with bitterness that horrible sacrifice, and trembles at the name of such a father. All her affections are concentrated in Ægisthus and her children, and she loves to think that Ægisthus will be a more tender father than Agamemnon to Electra and to Orestes. Electra approaches, and Clytemnestra, in order to speak with her, prevails upon Ægisthus to leave them.

Electra relates the various reports which have spread through Argos respecting the Grecian fleet. Some assert that contrary winds have driven it back to the mouth of the Bosphorus; others that it has been shipwrecked on the rocks, while others again believe that they see the sails near the shore. Clytemnestra demands, with sarcastic bitterness, whether the gods wish that another of her children should be sacrificed for the

return of Agamemnon, even as one perished on his departure. The character of Electra is admirable throughout. All her speeches are full of tenderness, respect and devotion to her father, and of affection and deep pity for her mother's aberration. She hints to her cautiously and sorrowfully that she is aware of her fresh dislike to Agamemnon, and that the court and the public, as well as herself, are acquainted with the cause of it.

Beloved mother,
What art thou doing? I do not believe
That a flagitious passion fires thy breast.
Involuntary fondness, sprung from pity,
Which youth, especially when 'tis unhappy,
Is apt to inspire, these, mother, are the baits
By which, without thyself suspecting it,
Thou hast been caught. Thou hast not hitherto
Each secret impulse rigorously examined:
A bosom conscious of its rectitude
Hardly admits suspicion of itself;
And here, perchance, there is no ground for it:
Perchance thy fame thou yet hast scarcely sullied,
Much less thy virtue, and there still is time
To make atonement with one easy step.—
Ah! by the sacred shade, so dear to thee,
Of thy devoted daughter; by that love
Which thou hast ever shown and felt for me—
That love of which to-day I am not worthy;
How can I more persuasively adjure thee?
By thy son's life, Orestes' life, I pray thee
Pause on the brink of this tremendous gulf;
Beloved mother, pause. Afar from Argos
Banish Ægisthus: stop malignant tongues
By thy deportment: with thy children weep
The hardships of Atrides, and frequent
With them the sacred temples of the gods
To implore his swift return.

Clytemnestra is moved; she weeps; she accuses herself, and she likewise accuses the blood of Leda which runs through her veins; and the momentary flash of truth which passes across her mind, while it fails to convince her, fills her with terror.

At the beginning of the second act Ægisthus and Clytemnestra dispute upon the steps most expedient to be taken. The ships of Agamemnon now enter the port. He lands and advances toward the palace, upon which Ægisthus proposes to make his escape, but Clytemnestra, mad with love, will listen to no advice nor see any danger. If prudence bids her hasten the flight of her lover, it is her part, she says, to fly with him, like Helen. Ægisthus, who beseeches her to suffer his departure, endeavors, by the apprehension of his absence, to add fuel to her love and jealousy. He, in fact, wishes to be prevented from going, and Clytemnestra begs him to remain a single day, exacting an oath from him that he will not quit the walls of Argos before the ensuing dawn. He consents and Electra, appearing, begs her mother to fly to the king. Clytemnestra, instead of answering her daughter, solemnly requests Ægisthus to repeat his oath; and this appeal, which she again makes at the end of the scene, after Electra has manifested her aversion for Ægisthus, and the dread with which his stay inspires her, fully displays all Clytemnestra's passion. Ægisthus, being left alone, rejoices that his victims have at length fallen into his snares, and again promises the shade of Thyestes to avenge upon Agamemnon and his children the execrable repast of Atreus. He at length retires, on

beholding the approach of Agamemnon, accompanied by Electra and Clytemnestra, and surrounded by the soldiers and the people.

Alfieri has skilfully delineated in Agamemnon the tender feelings of a good king returning to his people, of a patriot restored to his country and of a kind father again embracing his family:

> At last I see the wished-for walls of Argos.
> This ground which now I tread is the loved spot
> Where once I wandered with my infant feet.
> All that I see around me are my friends:—
> My wife, my daughter, and my faithful people,
> And you, ye household gods, whom I at last
> Return to worship. What have I to wish?
> What does there now remain for me to hope?
> How long and tedious do ten years appear
> Spent in a foreign country, far from all
> The heart holds dear! With what profound delight,
> After the labors of a bloody war,
> Shall I repose? Oh home, beloved asylum,
> Where peace alone awaits us, with what joy
> Thee I revisit! But am I, alas!
> The only one that tastes of comfort here?
> My wife, my daughters! silently ye stand
> Fixing upon the ground unquietly
> Your conscious eyes. O heaven, do ye not feel
> A joy that equals mine in being thus
> Restored to my embrace?

Clytemnestra is agitated and Electra is in fear for her; but her presence of mind is restored by the very sound of her own voice, and as she proceeds her answers become more intelligible. Agamemnon himself alludes to the misfortune which has deprived him of his other daughter, and which he regards as a divine

ordinance to which his paternal heart is yet unable to bow:

> **Oft in my helmet bonneted I wept**
> **In silence: but, except the father, none**
> **Were conscious of these tears.**

He inquires for Orestes and longs to embrace him. He asks whether he has yet entered upon the paths of virtue, and whether, when he hears of glorious achievements or beholds a brandished sword, his eyes do not sparkle with ardor.

Agamemnon and Electra appear at the commencement of the third act, and the king inquires from his daughter what is the cause of the singular change which he has remarked in Clytemnestra. He is less surprised at her first silence than at the studied and constrained manner in which she afterward addressed him. Electra, compelled to give some reason for the change, attributes it to the sacrifice of Iphigenia, and thus gives Agamemnon an opportunity of exculpating himself to the audience from all the odium which that sacrifice had cast upon him. He then asks how it happens that the son of Thyestes is in Argos. He is astonished at learning the fact for the first time on his arrival, and he perceives that every one mentions his name with repugnance. Electra replies that Ægisthus is unfortunate, but that Agamemnon will judge better than she can whether he is worthy of pity. Ægisthus is afterward brought before him, and informs him that the hatred and jealousy of his brothers have driven him from his country. He represents himself as a pro-

scribed suppliant; he flatters Agamemnon to obtain his favor; he is humble without debasing himself, and treacherous without creating disgust. Agamemnon reminds him of the family enmities, which should have induced him to look for an asylum in any other place than the palace of Atreus:

> **Hitherto, Ægisthus,**
> **Thou wert, and still thou art, to me unknown;**
> **I neither hate nor love thee; yet, though willing**
> **To lay aside hereditary discord,**
> **I cannot, without feeling in my breast,**
> **I know not what of strange and perplex'd feeling,**
> **Behold the countenance, nor hear the voice**
> **Of one that is the offspring of Thyestes.**

As Ægisthus, however, implores his protection, he promises to use his influence amongst the Greeks in his favor, but he commands him to leave Argos before the morrow. As Ægisthus leaves the king, Clytemnestra enters. She is much agitated and fears lest her husband has discovered her inconstancy. She rejects the consolatory attentions of her daughter and the hope which she had endeavored to excite in her breast that it was still possible for her to return to the paths of duty. At length she retires to indulge her melancholy reflections in solitude.

The fourth act opens with a conversation between Clytemnestra and Ægisthus, the former, after parting from her lover, abandoning herself to the impetuosity of her passion. This scene, which leads to such fatal consequences, is managed with infinite art. Ægisthus, while he appears submissive, tender and despairing,

aims only at instilling poison into the heart of his victim. She wishes to follow him, to fly with him. He, however, shows her the folly of her projects and the impossibility of executing any of them. He represents himself as surrounded with dangers, and her as lost, and for a long time he refuses to mention any means of avoiding the evil. At last he tells her that one resource remains, though an unworthy one.

Ægisthus.—Another step perhaps e'en now remains,
But unbecoming——
Clytemnestra.— And it is?——
Ægis.— Too cruel.
Cly.—But certain——
Ægis.— Certain! ah, too much so!
Cly.— How
Canst thou hide it from me?
Ægis.— How canst thou
Of me demand it?

Clytemnestra still hesitates; she wavers; she considers all the pretended causes of hatred toward Agamemnon; all her own and her lover's dangers, and she then asks what other step she can take, to which Ægisthus answers: None. But as he utters this word the dark glaring of his eyes at once informs the queen that he thirsts for the blood of Agamemnon. Clytemnestra tremblingly strengthens herself to commit the crime, and Ægisthus chooses that moment to tell her that the king has brought Cassandra with him; that she is his mistress, and that he intends speedily to sacrifice his wife to her. The approach of Electra compels the

guilty pair to separate. She perceives with terror the agitation of her mother, and forebodes the crimes of Ægisthus. She beseeches the king to dismiss him immediately. Agamemnon attributes her terror to the hereditary enmity between the blood of Atreus and of Thyestes, and feels that he would be wanting in hospitality if he should hasten the banishment of an unfortunate stranger. He then consults Clytemnestra, who, at the very name of Ægisthus, betrays the most extreme emotion. Demanding the cause of her disturbance, he laments with her the death of Iphigenia, and attempts, but in vain, to dissipate her suspicions respecting Cassandra.

At the commencement of the fifth act Clytemnestra appears alone with a poniard in her hand. She has bound herself by an oath to shed the blood of her husband, and she prepares to perpetrate the crime; but, in the absence of Ægisthus, remorse attacks her. She is shocked at the enterprise and casts away the dagger, when Ægisthus, again making his appearance, rekindles her fury. He informs her that Agamemnon is acquainted with their love, and that on the morrow they must appear before that stern judge, when death and infamy will be their portion if Atrides is suffered to live. Perusading her to persevere, he arms her with a more deadly dagger—with that which sacrificed the sons of Thyestes. He hurries her into the apartment of her husband, and invokes the shade of Thyestes to enjoy the infernal revenge which is to be accomplished by the wife of the son of Atreus. During this terrible invocation are heard the cries of Agamemnon, who

recognizes his wife as he dies. Of Clytemnestra, who returns to the stage distracted, Ægisthus takes no notice, while the palace resounds with terrific cries. He perceives that the time is now come to show himself in his true colors and to gather the fruits of his protracted hypocrisy. He determines to murder Orestes and to mount the throne of Atrides. Electra, rushing in, accuses Ægisthus of the crime, but, seeing her mother armed with a bloody poniard, she recognizes, with horror, the true assassin. She seizes the dagger, in order to preserve it for Orestes, whom she has placed in a safe retreat. The horrid truth now flashes upon Clytemnestra's mind; she sees that Ægisthus has been gratifying his hatred, and not his love, and she flies after him to preserve the life of her son.

Other Tragedies.

With the *Agamemnon* were published five other tragedies—the *Orestes, Rosmunda, Octavia, Timoleon* and *Merope*. The first is a continuation of the *Agamemnon,* with an interval of ten years, and the play opens on the anniversary of the king's murder. By making the action, from the commencement, extremely violent, and the hate, even of the virtuous characters, unnaturally intense, Alfieri thought that he had produced a drama worthy of his talents; but such was not the opinion of the public. In order to touch the feelings, it was necessary for him to mingle at least some trace of tenderness with the natural acerbity of his genius; but to this he would not consent, fatiguing the spectators

by scenes of uninterrupted rage. Electra, Ægisthus, Clytemnestra and Orestes seem to be always prepared to tear one another to pieces. The fury of Orestes is so unceasing and so near to madness that we can easily comprehend how it was possible for him, in the last act, to murder his mother without knowing her.

Rosmunda, a queen of the barbarian Lombards, who puts her husband, Alboino, to death in order to revenge the murder of her father, Cunimond, has furnished Alfieri with the subject of another of his tragedies, one that the author regarded as a masterpiece, but which did not find favor with the public. The two female characters, Rosmunda and Romilda, the daughter of Alboino by a former wife, both of them urged by the demoniac spirit of revenge, are engaged from the beginning, as are all the other characters, in a war of hatred which disgusts the spectator. Nature, the true gradation of the passions and theatrical effect, are alike sacrificed to this universal fury. The subject of the drama is the author's own invention, and in this he has not been happy, for the plot is not natural.

The historical tragedies of *Octavia* and *Timoleon* are both open to the charge of exaggeration. In the former, the vices of the characters, and in the latter, their virtues, are on too gigantic a scale. Neither the madness of Nero nor the fratricide of Timoleon, although it restored liberty to Corinth, is a fit subject for the drama. *Merope* is the last of the group, and, perhaps, the best. It is interesting, correct in feeling, and original in conception, notwithstanding that the theme had been treated by Maffei and Voltaire.

V.

Alfieri's Later Works.

Among the tragedies which belong to the later portion of Alfieri's works, *Saul* is the one which affords the best extracts. This play, which was a favorite with the author, likewise maintained its place upon the stage. The austere and vigorous style of Alfieri suited well with the patriarchal times which are there represented. We do not require the first monarch of Israel to be surrounded by a numerous court or to act solely by the intervention of his ministers, and we cannot forget that he was a shepherd-king. On the other hand, there is in portions of the drama an oriental richness of expression, and, indeed, this is the first of Alfieri's tragedies in which the language is habitually poetical.

At the dawn of day David, clothed as a soldier, appears alone at Gilboa, between the camps of the Hebrews and Philistines. God who has protected him from the pursuit and frenzy of Saul, has now conducted him thither to give fresh proofs of his obedience and his valor. Jonathan, coming forth from the tent of the king to pray, finds his friend and recognizes him by his hardihood. He tells him how his

father, Saul, is tormented by an evil spirit, and how Abner, his lieutenant, takes advantage of this to sacrifice all whose merit has given him offence. He then informs him that Michal, the sister of Jonathan and the wife of David, is in the camp with Saul, her father, whom she is comforting and consoling in his afflictions, and from whom she has begged, in return, that he will restore David to her. He addresses David with a mixture of respect and love, regarding him both as the friend of his heart and as the messenger and favorite of God. The tender, faithful and constant nature of David is painted in the finest manner. The love of the Lord triumphs over all his affections; but his enthusiasm, however exalted, does not extinguish the natural sentiments of his heart. Jonathan informs him that Michal will soon leave the tent and join him in the morning prayers, and, as she approaches, he persuades David to conceal himself, in order that he may guard her against the surprise. Michal is a tender and suffering woman; she has no other thought but of David; all her fears and all her desires centre in him. As soon as Jonathan has prepared her to expect the return of her husband, David throws himself into her arms. They agree that he should present himself to Saul previous to the battle which the latter is about to fight with the Philistines, and that Michal and Jonathan shall prepare the way for his reception, while David himself awaits their instructions in a neighboring cavern.

The second act opens with a scene between Saul and Abner. Saul is lamenting over his old age, the succor of

the Almighty withheld from him, and the power of his enemies, with which he is deeply affected. His language is that of a noble but dejected soul. Abner attributes all the misfortunes of the king to David, but Saul replies:

> Thou 'rt deceived—
> All my calamities may be referred
> To a more terrible cause.—And what? wouldst thou
> Conceal from me the horror of my state?
> Ah! were I not a father as I am,
> Alas! too certainly, of much loved children,
> Would I now wish life, victory, or the throne?
> I should already, and a long time since,
> Headlong have cast myself 'mid hostile swords:
> I should already, thus at least, at once
> Have closed the horrible life that I drag on.
> How many years have now pass'd since a smile
> Was seen to play upon my lips? My children,
> Whom still I love so much, if they caress me,
> For the most part inflame my heart to rage:
> Impatient, fierce, incensed and turbulent,
> I am a burden to myself and others.
> In peace I wish for war, in war for peace:
> Poison conceal'd I drink in every cup—
> In every friend I see an enemy:
> The softest carpets of Assyria seem
> Planted with thorns to my unsolaced limbs:
> My transient sleep is agonized with fear—
> Each dream, with imaged terrors that distract me.
> Why should I add to this dark catalogue—
> Who would believe it?—The sonorous trumpet
> Speaks to my ears in an appalling voice,
> And fills the heart of Saul with deep dismay.
> Thou seest clearly that Saul's tottering house
> Is desolate, bereft of all its splendor;
> Thou seest that God hath cast me off forever.

The character of Saul, throughout the whole drama, is consistent with the representation of it in this scene. He impetuously abandons himself to the most contrary passions, and the latest word which he hears awakens a new storm in his soul. He easily believes his glory tarnished and his power departing; he menaces; he punishes, and his fury appears to him a fresh instance of that divine vengeance under which he is perishing. Abner attributes his violence and his aberration of mind to the superstitious terrors which Samuel and the prophets of Rama have excited, and which the enthusiasm of David has nourished. Jonathan and Michal, who enter at this moment, entreat him, on the contrary, to believe that his power and glory are connected with the return of David, whom they announce as the messenger of God and the pledge of divine protection. When the mind of Saul is thus warmed, David enters and throws himself at his feet. He calms, by his submissive deportment, the first burst of anger which his appearance has excited; he repels the accusations of Abner, and proves that, far from laying snares for the king, he had his life in his power in the cave of Enjedi, where, while Saul was sleeping, he cut off a portion of his garment, which he now presents to him. Saul is convinced, he calls David his son and commends him to the love of Michal as a recompense for his sufferings. He then commits to him the command of the army, and begs him to arrange the order of the approaching battle.

At the commencement of the third act Abner gives an account to David of the order of battle which he had proposed when he conceived himself to be sole general.

He mingles some bitter irony with his report, which David treats with silence. The latter approves of the military dispositions and confides the execution of them to Abner, mingling praises of his valor with the counsels which he gives him. Scarcely has Abner departed when Michal appears to inform her husband that the general, having seen Saul, has awakened with a single word all his former fury. She fears that David will again be forced to fly, and she swears to accompany him in his exile. Saul now appears with Jonathan and displays symptoms of strong insanity:

> **Who are ye? Who speaks of pure air here?**
> **This? 'tis a thick, impenetrable gloom,**
> **A land of darkness, and the shades of death.**
> **Ah, see! more nearly it approaches me—**
> **A fatal wreath of blood surrounds the sun—**
> **Heard'st thou the death notes of ill-omen'd birds?**
> **With loud laments the vocal air resounds**
> **That smite my ears, compelling me to weep;**
> **But what, do ye weep also?**

Saul then asks for David and reproaches him for his pride—for deep jealousy is the true madness of Saul—and for the enthusiastic tone in which he speaks of God, since the Divinity is his enemy and his praises are insults to Saul. He is astonished at beholding the sword which David had taken from Goliath and which had been afterward dedicated to God in the tabernacle of Nob, and he becomes furious when he learns that Abimelech has restored this sword to David. But his fury exhausts itself; he relents; he melts into tears, and Jonathan urges David to seize upon this moment

to calm the frenzy of the king by his songs and his harp. David sings or recites some lyrical effusions, of which he changes the metre according to the subject, to suit the temper of Saul's mind. He first implores the protection of God, then sings of martial glory in the stanza of the canzoni; but, upon Saul exclaiming that these are the songs of his youth and that henceforward relaxation, oblivion and peace must be the portion of his old age, David sings the hymn of peace in harmonious and tender strains. Saul is angry with himself that he can be moved by such effeminate compositions, and David again commences his war song. In animated dithyrambic verse he paints the glory of Saul in his battles and represents himself as marching in his footsteps. This allusion to another warrior exasperates Saul; in his fury he attempts to transfix the minstrel who has dared to introduce the mention of another's exploits, and David escapes with difficulty, while Jonathan and Michal restrain the anger of the king.

In the fourth scene of the third act Saul bemoans his fate in the presence of his daughter Michal, Jonathan and David:

Saul.—I am bereft of peace; the sun, my kingdom,
My children, and my pow'r of thought, all, all
Are taken from me! . . . Ah, unhappy Saul!
Who doth console thee? who is now the guide,
The prop of thy bewilder'd feebleness? . . .
Thy children all are mute; are harsh and cruel. . . .
And of the doting and infirm old man
They only wish the death; and naught attracts
My children but the fatal diadem
Which now is twined around thy hoary head.
Wrest it at once; and at the same time sever

From this now tremulous decaying form
Your father's palsied head. . . . Ah, wretched state!
Better were death. I wish for death. . . .

Michal.— O father! . . .
We all desire thy life: we each of us
Would die ourselves, to rescue thee from death. . . .

Jonathan.—Now, since in tears his fury is dissolved,
Brother, do thou, to recompose his soul,
Exert thy voice. So many times already
Hast thou enthrall'd him with celestial songs
To calm oblivion.

Mich.— Yes; thou seest now,
The breathing in his panting breast subsides;
His looks, just now so savage, swim in tears:
Now is the time to lend him thy assistance.

David.—May God in mercy speak to him through me.——

Omnipotent, eternal, infinite,
Thou, who dost govern each created thing;
Thou, who from nothing mad'st me by thy might,
Blest with a soul that dares to thee take wing;
Thou, who canst pierce th' abyss of endless night,
And all its myst'ries into daylight bring;
The universe doth tremble at thy nod,
And sinners prostrate own the outstretch'd arm of God.

Oft on the gorgeous blazing wings ere now
Of thousand cherubim wert thou reveal'd;
Oft did thy pure Divinity endow
Thy people's shepherd in the martial field:
To him a stream of eloquence wert thou;
Thou wert his sword, his wisdom and his shield:
From thy bright throne, O God, bestow one ray
To cleave the gath'ring clouds that intercept the day.
In tears of darkness we. . . .

Saul.— Hear I the voice
Of David? . . . From a mortal lethargy
It seems to wake me, and displays to me
The cheering radiance of my early years.

Dav.—Who comes, who comes, unseen, yet heard?
A sable cloud of dust appear'd,
Chased by the eastern blast.——
But it has burst; and from its womb
A thousand brandish'd swords illume
The track through which it pass'd. . . .

Saul, as a tow'r, his forehead rears,
His head a flaming circlet wears.
The earth beneath his feet
Echoes with tramp of horse and men:
The sea, the sky, the hills, the plain,
The war-like sounds repeat.

In awful majesty doth Saul appear;
Horsemen and chariots from before him fly:
Chill'd by his presence is each heart with fear;
And god-like terrors lighten in his eye.

Ye sons of Ammon, late so proud,
Where now the scorn, the insults loud,
Ye raised against our host?
Your corpses more than fill the plain;
The ample harvest of your slain
Invalidates your boast.

See what it is thus to depend
On gods unable to defend.—
But wherefore from afar
Hear I another trumpet sound?
'Tis Saul's:—he levels with the ground
All Edom's sons of war.

After a few more verses in similar strain, David continues:

The monarch is roused from his slumbers:
"Arms, arms," he imperiously cries.
They are vanquished,—the enemy's numbers;
What champion his valor defies?

I see, I see a track of fearful fire,
To which perforce the hostile squadrons yield.
Before the arms of Israel they retire,
Which, black with hostile gore, possess the field.

The wing'd thunderbolt huge stones doth shower,
And far less promptly doth the foe retreat,
Than our dread sov'reign in his mighty power
Pursues him and his overthrow completes.

Like a proud eagle, his audacious flight,
Wing'd with immortal pinions, tow'rd the pole
He aims. His eyes are like the lightning bright;
His talons God's own thunderbolts control,

Annihilating those base sons of earth,
Who in false temples have false gods adored;
Whose gods impure to rites impure gave birth,
Who dare compare themselves with Israel's Lord.

Long, long have I pursued his ardent path;
Now it behooves me once more to pursue
His foes on earth; with heav'n-directed wrath
To trample down and crush Philistia's crew.

And with th' assistance of the God of hosts,
Prove that, as he, so I maintain his laws;
And prove that now the camp of Israel boasts
Two swords resistless in a righteous cause.

Here the evil spirit comes over Saul, who says:

Saul.—Who, who thus boasts? Is there, except my sword,
Which I unsheathe, another in the camp?
He's a blasphemer; let him perish, he
Who dares defy it.

Michal.—Ah forbear, O heav'ns!

Jonathan.—Father, what wouldst thou do?

David.— Unhappy king!

Mich.—Ah fly! Ah fly! With difficulty we
Can hold him back. Dear husband, fly!

At the commencement of the fourth act Michal inquires from Jonathan whether David may yet return to her father's tent, but is told that, although the frenzy of the king has passed away, his anger still remains. Saul then enters and orders Michal to go in search of David, though, as she declares,

I have so well concealed him that no man
Will ever find him.

Saul turns to Jonathan and asks complainingly,

Lov'st thou thy father? . . .
Jonathan.— Father! . . . yes, I love thee:
But loving thee, I also love thy glory:
Hence sometimes I oppose, far as a son
Ought to oppose, thine impulses unjust.
Saul.—Often thy father's arm dost thou restrain:
But, thou dost turn against thyself that sword
Which thou avertest from another's breast.
Yes, yes, defend that David to the utmost;
Shortly will he . . . Dost thou not hear a voice
That in thy heart cries: "David will be king?"
——David? He shall be immolated first.
Jon.—And doth not God, with a more dreadful voice,
Cry in my heart: "My favorite is David;
He is the chosen of the Lord of hosts?"
Doth not each act of his confirm this truth?
Was not the frantic and invidious rage
Of Abner silenced by his mere approach?
And thou, when thou reënter'st in thyself,
Dost thou not find that, only at his presence,
All thy suspicions vanish like a cloud

Before the sun? And dost thou fondly dream,
When the malignant spirit visits thee,
That I restrain thy arm? 'Tis God restrains it.
Scarcely wilt thou have levell'd at his breast
Thy evil-brandish'd sword, when thou wilt be
Forced to withdraw it suddenly: in tears
Thou thyself prostrate at his feet wilt fall;
Yes, father, thou, repentant: for thou art
Indeed not impious. . . .

Saul.— But, too true thy words.
A strange, inexplicable mystery
This David is to me. No sooner I
In Elah had beheld him, than he pleased
My eyes; but never, never won my heart.
When I might almost be disposed to love him,
A fierce repulsion shoots athwart my breast,
And weans me from him. Scarcely do I wish
For his destruction than, if I behold him,
He straight disarms me, with such wonder fills me
That in his presence I become as nothing. . . .
Ah! this is surely, this the vengeance is
Of the inscrutable Almighty hand!

The fifth act commences with Michal leading David from his retreat. She informs him that dangers are closing round him, and entreats him to fly and bear her along with him. David wishes to remain to fight with his countrymen, and to perish in the battle; but as soon as he hears that the blood of the priests has been shed by the order of Saul, that the camp is polluted and the ground stained with it, he acknowledges that he can never combat in this place, and resolves to fly. He is, however, unwilling to carry away with him a daughter who is her father's sole consolation, and he, therefore, supplicates and commands her to remain. Their sepa-

ration is tender and touching, and David takes his lonely way through the craggy passes of the mountains. Scarcely has he departed when Michal hears the sounds of conflict at the extremity of the camp, and groans proceeding from the tent of her father. Saul is again furious; the excess of his delirium is redoubled by the remorse which oppresses him. He sees the shade of Samuel menacing him, of Abimelech, and of the victims slain at Nob. His way is on every side obstructed by the bodies of the dead. He offers up his supplications and entreats that at least the anger of God may pass away from the heads of his children. His delirium is truly sublime, and the apparitions which torment him fill the imagination of the spectator. Suddenly the shades disappear; he hears only the cry of battle, which approaches nearer and nearer.

Saul.—Incensed, tremendous shade, ah, go thy way!
Leave, leave me! see, before thy feet I kneel.
Where can I fly? where can I hide myself?
O fierce, vindictive spectre, be appeased. . . .
But to my supplications it is deaf;
And does it spurn me? Burst asunder, earth,
Swallow me up alive. . . . Ah! that at least
The fierce and threatening looks of that dire shade
May not quite pierce me through.

Michal.— From whom dost fly?
No one pursues thee. Dost thou see me not,
Father? dost thou not know me?

Saul.— O most high,
Most holy priest, wilt thou that here I pause?
O Samuel, thou my real father once,
Dost thou command it? Prostrate, see, I fall
At thy supreme command. Thou, with thy hand,

Placedst the royal crown upon this head;
Thou didst adorn it; strip it; strip it now
Of all its honors; tread them under foot.
But O . . . the flaming sword of God's revenge
Which glares eternally before my eyes. . . .
Thou, who canst do it, snatch it from me,
O no, but from my children. Of my crime
My children they are innocent.

Mich.—What art thou doing, father?
Be tranquil. . . . To thy daughter. . . .

Saul.— I will have
My arms; what daughter? Now, thou dost obey me.
My helm, my spear, my shield; behold my children.

Mich.—I will not leave thee, no. . . .

Saul.— The trumpets sound
Louder and louder! Thither let me go:
For me my sword alone will be sufficient.—
Thou, quit me, go; obey. I thither run:
There, where the death I seek for has its home.

Saul had resolved to engage in the ensuing morning; but it is yet night, and the Philistines are within his camp. Abner arrives with a handful of soldiers, and wishes to carry the king to the mountains, to a place of safety. The Philistines surprise the Israelites, and Jonathan perishes with all his brothers. The army is completely routed, and only a few moments' space remain for flight. Of this Saul obstinately refuses to take advantage; he orders Abner to bear Michal to a place of safety, forcing her to leave him, and then remains alone on the stage:

Oh my children,
I was a father.—See thyself alone,
O King! Of thy so many friends and servants,

Not one remains.—Inexorable God!
Is thy retributory wrath appeased?
But thou remain'st to me, O sword! Now come,
My faithful servant in extremity,
Hark! hark! the howling of the insolent victors!
The lightning of their burning torches glares
Before my eyes already, and I see
Their swords by thousands. Impious Philistine!
Thou shalt find me, but like a king, here, dead.

As Saul speaks these words he falls, transfixed by his own sword. The victorious Philistines surround him in a crowd, with blazing torches and bloody swords. While they are rushing with loud cries upon Saul, the curtain falls.

This tragedy is essentially different from the other dramas of Alfieri. It is conceived in the spirit of Shakespeare, and not of the French drama. It is not a conflict between passion and duty, which furnishes the plot. We find here a representation of a noble character, suffering under those weaknesses which sometimes accompany the greatest virtues, and governed by the fatality, not of destiny, but of human nature. There is very little action in the piece. Saul perishes, the victim, not of his passions, not of his crimes, but of his remorse, augmented by the terror which a gloomy imagination has cast over his soul. He is perhaps the only heroic madman who has been introduced into the classical drama; while, in the romantic theatre, Shakespeare and his followers have delineated with terrible truth this living death, far more shocking than actual dissolution; this melancholy catastrophe in the drama of real

life, which, though ennobled by the rank of its victim, is yet not confined to any one class, and, though exhibited to our eyes in a king, menaces all alike.

Alfieri's Latest Tragedies.

At the same time with *Saul* appeared the eight last tragedies of Alfieri. In *Mary Stuart* the scene is laid, not at the melancholy termination of her long captivity, but at the period when she entered into the conspiracy with Bothwell against her husband, and tarnished her fame with the blood of the unfortunate Darnley. *The Conspiracy of the Pazzi*, in 1478, to restore liberty to Florence, is the subject of the second of these pieces. The catastrophe is striking, and the situation of Bianca, the sister of the Medici and the wife of one of the Pazzi, distracted between her affection for her brothers and her husband, forms the chief interest of the drama. *Don Garcia* is also drawn from the history of the Medici, after that ambitious family had gained possession of the sovereign power. One of the sons of Cosmo I, Don Garcia, was the instrument of the terrible vengeance of his father, by whose order he slew with his own hand and in the obscurity of night, his brother, whom he did not know, and was himself, in his turn, put to death by the tyrant. The fourth tragedy is *Agis*, king of Sparta, whom the Ephori put to death for attempting to augment the privilege of the people and to place bounds to the power of the aristocracy. The next tragedy is the *Elder Brutus,* who condemned to death his own sons; the next, *Myrrha,* who died the

victim of her sinful passions. The last is founded on the story of the younger Brutus, one of the assassins of Cæsar.

Sophonisba.

Trissino's *Sophonisba*, first performed at Vicenza in 1514, was, as we have seen, the first regular tragedy produced on the Italian stage. It was highly commended by Sismondi, but denounced by Schlegel as the production of a "spiritless pedant." As treated by Alfieri the subject is worked up into one of his finest tragedies. The characters are Scipio Africanus, conqueror of Carthage; Syphax, king of Western Numidia, or Mauritania, who has been defeated and taken prisoner by Scipio, but was formerly his friend; Masinissa, king of Eastern Numidia, or Massylia, the ally of Scipio and enemy of Syphax; and Sophonisba, daughter of Asdrubal, the Carthaginian. She inherits all the hatred of Rome felt by her father and her uncle, Hannibal. Originally betrothed to Masinissa, during his absence she was given in marriage to Syphax, in order to secure his assistance against the Romans, the result being to drive Masinissa into the arms of Rome. The scene is the camp of Scipio in Africa, and the date 203 B. C., during the second Punic war.

In the fourth act Masinissa tells a faithful follower to keep a bowl of poison in readiness for use, and awaits an audience with Sophonisba. She tells him that Syphax is coming to see him, and that she herself intends to reunite her fortunes with her husband. He replies that he will never part with her. Syphax comes,

and Masinissa generously proposes to procure the escape of his rival and Sophonisba with the help of his Numidian troops, and to escort them safely to the walls of Carthage, avowing that he is solely instigated by his deep anxiety for Sophonisba's fate. Syphax refuses, and voluntarily offers to resign his wife to Masinissa, intending to slay himself.

Sophonisba.— I expected
No more to see thee; and in truth I ought not;
But—when thou hear'st it, canst thou trust my words?—
Syphax himself enjoin'd it.
Masinissa.— Was he moved
By scorn or pity?
Soph.— Magnanimity;
More than enough to reawaken in us
A noble emulation. He himself
Would fain converse with thee; but he commands
That I precede him; and that . . .
Mas.— Can I bear
A sight like this?
Soph.— Art thou less great than he?
Fears he thy sight?
Mas.— Nor can I tell thee first . . . ?
Soph.—What canst thou tell me that I ought to hear?
Mas.—In vain didst thou inflict on me new torments:
I would inform thee that I here enticed thee,
And that I would, at any cost, myself
Drag thee from hence.
Soph.— I gave myself to thee,
Thou knowest it; from thee I take myself.
A lofty duty, fatal to myself,
Demands this sacrifice. I certain am,
By following Syphax, to withdraw myself
From ev'ry ill. Do thou, then, now from me
Learn to be strong. This is the camp of Rome;

Scipio is station'd here; a monarch, thou
Art station'd here; and I am station'd here,
Asdrubal's daughter. Tell me, wouldst thou now
That ours should only be a vulgar love?

Mas.—Ah! with a flame far different to them
My bosom is consumed. . . . In thee alone
I place my fame, my glory and my greatness. . . .
Thou shouldst be mine; although my kingdom perish;
The whole world perish . . . mine thou shalt be. I
Perils and losses neither know nor fear.
I am prepared for all, except to lose thee;
And sooner . . .

Soph.— With possession of my heart,
Ah, be thou satisfied . . . prove not thyself
Of this unworthy . . . but, what do I say?
The sight, the sight alone of Syphax, pow'rless,
Vanquish'd and captive, yet serene and firm,
Will of itself restore thee to thy reason.

Mas.—Unhappy I! could I at least alone . . .
But I am not less generous than you;
I am, indeed, far different a lover;
And I prepare to yield to you of this
A memorable proof.

Soph.— See, here is Syphax.

Mas.—He, too, may hear me; nor will ye have then
Courage to scorn me. (Enter Syphax.)

Masinissa.— Now before thine eyes,
Syphax, thy mortal foe, presents himself;
But thou beholdest him in such a state
That he no more thy indignation merits.

Syphax.—All indignation from a king in chains
Would be but foolishness. If in my presence
My rival formerly had shown himself,
While I possess'd a sword, I might have then
Display'd to him no inefficient wrath:
Now cruel fate hath nothing left to me
But a firm visage and impassive heart.
Hence shalt thou hear me speak to thee with mildness.

Mas.—My desperate, immeasurable grief
Should be to thee no trifling consolation:
Then learn what that grief is.—See me: I am
Far more enchain'd than thou art, far more vanquish'd,
More stripp'd of judgment, and far less a king.
Thou tookest formerly my realm, but then
Thou wert not, as thou'rt now, my conqueror:
An indefatigable foe, more fierce,
More ardent, always I arose again
From my defeats: till I alternately
Became a conqueror, regain'd my own,
And took thy kingdom.—But do thou exult,
And triumph; for this noble woman now,
Whom thou hast twice from Masinissa snatch'd,
Gives thee the palm of perfect triumph o'er me.

In the last act Scipio tells Masinissa that his plan has been disclosed to him by Sophonisba herself, when she found that Syphax had destroyed himself. Sophonisba protests to Masinissa that nothing now will induce her to live, and that if he will not provide her with the means of carrying out her design she will kill herself by starvation. Finding all his entreaties useless, he calls for the bowl of poison and allows her to drink it, on condition that she leaves enough for him also. She, however, drains it to the dregs, and he is in the act of stabbing himself when Scipio rushes in and disarms him.

Alfieri's Comedies.

The comedies of Alfieri, of which there are six, are not adapted to the stage. It is, indeed, difficult to conceive how this celebrated man could have entertained

the idea of making comedy a vehicle for his political sentiments. The four first, which are in fact only one drama divided into four parts, are written to illustrate the monarchial, the aristocratic, the democratic and the mixed form of government. He has entitled them, *One, Few, Too Many* and *The Antidote.* They are all in iambics, as are his tragedies. The scene of the first is laid in Persia, and the subject is the election of Darius to the throne by the neighing of his horse. The drama turns upon the fraud of Darius' groom, who, by an artifice, makes his master's steed neigh before any of the others; and the king's ingratitude in sacrificing his horse to the sun, and then raising a statue to him, forms the catastrophe. The scene of the second, the drama of aristocracy, is laid at Rome, in the house of the Gracchi, and the subject is the contest between them and Fabius for the consulate. Their defeat and humiliation induce them to propose an Agrarian law. The scene of the third comedy, *Democracy*, or *Too Many*, is laid at the court of Alexander, and the orators are introduced who have been despatched to the king by the Athenians. These orators are ten in number, and are divided into two parties, of which Demosthenes and Æschines are the leaders; and they are in turn courted and mocked by Alexander and his courtiers. Their baseness, their jealousy and their venality are fully displayed in the drama, which, however, can hardly be said to boast of any action. The play of *Mixed Government*, or, as it is singularly entitled, *Mix Three Poisons and You Will Have the Antidote*, is a plot of his own invention, and the scene is laid in one of the Orcades.

It was, to a certain extent, a new idea to choose heroic characters to fill the parts in comedy. Alfieri has expressed his dislike to what may be termed the drama of common life as debasing to dramatic art, and associating poetry with vulgar sentiments and circumstances. It is strange, however, that he should himself have felt no disgust at attributing vulgarity of manners, of feeling and language to men whose very names, rendered so familiar by history, lead us to expect from them something elevated and noble. He seems to have thought it necessary to introduce into his comedies the most distinguished men, merely to display their low and vulgar qualities. He has endued them with all the passions which their rank should have caused them most anxiously to conceal; he has attributed to them language which they would have blushed to hear, and he expects to excite laughter by exposing the poverty and often the grossness of great men's wit. To make vice ridiculous it is not necessary to excite repugnance, but the author produces in the reader a deep disgust for the society into which he is introduced, and a humiliating sense of the depravity of the human race, which even in the highest ranks can be thus debased.

Of the two remaining comedies of Alfieri, the one entitled *La Finestrina* is very fantastical; the scene is laid in hell, and the comedy, in fact, consists of the dialogues of the dead dramatized. The other is entitled *The Divorce*, not because a divorce is the subject of the piece, but because the author concludes by laying down a maxim that a marriage in Italy puts the parties upon precisely the same footing as a divorce elsewhere. This

is the only one of his dramas which can fairly be classed with modern comedies. The characters are finely drawn, and it contains a true but very severe representation of Italian manners. All the personages are more or less vicious, and there is, therefore, very little gayety in the piece, for it is impossible to laugh at anything which powerfully excites our indignation. The writer manifests in these dramas the powers of a great satirist, but not of a successful dramatist.

Posthumous Works.

The thirteen octavo volumes of Alfieri's posthumous works, published in 1804, occupied the attention of the literati of Europe, without adding much to his fame. In his *Abel*, a musical drama, which he terms a Tramelogedy—whatever that may mean—he has attempted to blend together the lyric and tragic styles, but the allegory is fatiguing on the stage, and the verses of Alfieri are not the most suitable of all poetry to set to music. There are two tragedies founded on the story of Alcestis, one translated from Euripides and the other recast and treated in his own manner. In the latter conjugal tenderness is beautifully depicted, and the intervention of supernatural powers and of the chorus, with a happy termination, give to it a pleasing character, though the seal of genius is not so strongly impressed as on his earlier tragedies. A volume of satires met with greater success than all his other compositions, notwithstanding their occasional obscurity and ruggedness of style; for the author's cynicism freely shows itself in

his writings, when not inconsistent with dignity. There are also numerous translations from classic authors, written after Alfieri had renounced dramatic composition and for want of other occupation had betaken himself to the study of Greek.

Alfieri's Autobiography.

The two last volumes contain the life of Alfieri, written by himself, with that warmth, vivacity and truth of feeling which throw such a charm over his confessions, and which never fail to interest the reader, although the author, honestly displaying his faults, sometimes appears in no very amiable light. The study of the human heart is always interesting, and doubly so when it presents us with portraits of men whose genius tinctures everything that it touches; who have, from time to time, influenced the opinions of their contemporaries; who have struck out new paths, led the way to new glories and created new schools of poetry; who, having impressed their character upon the age in which they lived, are cited by posterity as constituting the glory of their times. It is only in his memoirs that we become acquainted with Alfieri. Extracts from them can give no adequate idea of the seething impatience of character which incessantly propelled him toward some indefinite object; of the melancholy agitation of spirit which affected him in every relation of society, in every situation of life, and in every country; of the imperious craving which he ever felt in his soul for something more free in politics, more elevated in char-

acter, more devoted in love, more perfect in friendship; of the longing for another existence, for another universe, which he vainly sought as he travelled, with all the rapidity of a courier, from one extremity of Europe to the other, and of his thirst for that poetical creation which he was unable to satisfy, until, casting off the passions of his youth, his thoughts turned to the contemplation of the new universe which he had created in his own bosom, and the agitation of his soul was calmed by the production of those masterpieces which have immortalized his name.

VI.

The Drama in the Nineteenth Century.

The French revolution modified all European literature by altering the environment of men of letters, supplying them with themes and ideas which could not otherwise have come within their scope, and inspiring them with vehement passions according as their circumstances and temperaments led them to champion the new gospel or rally to the support of ancient traditions. Italy was one of the last countries to feel its effects in the literary sphere, chiefly because it did not, as elsewhere, originate in the land itself, but was thrust upon it by an invader whose oppression alienated much of the patriotic sentiment that would otherwise have welcomed the movement. Many of the Italian writers whose careers were powerfully affected by it were neither revolutionists nor anti-revolutionists, but as straws in a whirlpool. When, however, the idea of Italian unity—Napoleon's legacy to his true native country—had time to develop itself, and it had become manifest that the only path to it lay through a cordial adoption of revolutionary principles, the revolution acquired more practical significance for Italy than for any other country in the world.

In a certain respect, Alfieri may be considered as the first representative of both the sentimental and the national tendencies in modern Italian literature. He had denounced tyranny and extolled liberty while the Bastile had yet many years to stand; and if he could not write like Goethe or Rousseau, he had practically lived, and recorded in his autobiography, a life of sentiment and passion. The air of the revolution, nevertheless, was needed to bring these germs to maturity.

Vincenzo Monti.

Vincenzo Monti is far from being a champion of the revolution, for his celebrated poem, the *Basviliana*, is a denunciation of it, and, although he afterward changed sides, the republic was for him merely a transition to the empire. Nevertheless, he personifies, in a measure, Italy herself, amid the gusts of the revolutionary tempest, tossed to and fro between contending influences, her sails spread to the sky, her anchor still cleaving to earth. Born in the district of Ferrara and having gone through the ordeal so often exacted from poets of distasteful law-study, he repaired to Rome as a literary adventurer, and by his beautiful lyrics, adapted for recitation, sang himself into the good graces of the papal court. He took a yet higher flight in his tragedy of *Aristodemo,* which appeared in 1787. It is rather lyrical than dramatic, and as superior to Alfieri in versification as inferior in virile energy. The hero, who, to gain the suffrages of his fellow-citizens, and so attain regal power, has voluntarily offered up his daughter as

a sacrifice to the gods, appears upon the stage, fifteen years after the commission of this crime, devoured with remorse at having outraged nature to serve his ambition. The union of this remorse with the heroism which he displays in his public capacity, and with his affection toward another daughter, who has long been lost to him and whom he believes to be a Spartan captive, affords ample opportunity for fine acting and for producing strong emotion; but, in truth, there is very little action in the drama, which is filled with negotiations with the envoy of Sparta, and when at the conclusion he kills himself, his death is caused rather by his fifteen years of remorse than by anything which passes in the five acts of the tragedy. Yet we recognize the school of Alfieri in the loftiness of the characters, in the energy of the sentiments, in the simplicity of the action so devoid of incident, in the absence of all external pomp and in the interest sustained without the assistance of love. We likewise remark the peculiar talent of Monti, in which he excelled Alfieri; his harmony, his elegance and his poetical language, which, while they charm our minds, never fail to delight our ear.

Monti wrote another tragedy, entitled *Galeotto Manfredi,* the substance of which is drawn from the Italian chronicles of the fifteenth century—a period so fertile in tyrants and in crimes, when the prince of Faenza, the victim of his wife's jealousy, was assassinated by her order and under her own eyes. In this drama, likewise, Monti approaches Alfieri in the nakedness of the action, in the energy of the characters and in the eloquence of the sentiments. He has adhered but too

closely to his model in the neglect of all local coloring, and thus was lost an excellent opportunity of presenting to the spectators a lively picture of the Italians of the middle age.

Alessandro Manzoni.

Manzoni, though an Austrian subject, was born at Milan in 1784, and inherited from his father the title of count, which he always refused to wear. In youth he was a liberal thinker in religious matters, and by the stricter Catholics was classed as a Voltairean, not, as it seems, without grounds. He led the life of a respectable Italian gentleman of moderate fortune, at one time greatly impaired by his father's extravagance, and basked for nearly half a century in the tranquil enjoyment of fame, which, after the success of *I Promessi Sposi*, he imperilled by no further venture. "Formerly," he said, "the Muse came after me; now I should have to go after her." In 1808 he married the daughter of a Geneva banker, who, having herself been converted from Protestantism to the Catholic faith, converted her husband in turn. She was long remembered in Milan "for her fresh blond head and her blue eyes, her lovely eyes," and made her husband happy while she lived. Manzoni signalized his devotion and his new faith in his *Sacred Hymns,* published in 1815.

In 1820 Manzoni produced his first tragedy, *Il Conte di Carmagnola*, a romantic drama written in the boldest defiance of the unities of time and place, dispensing with these hitherto indispensable conditions of dramatic composition several years before Victor Hugo braved

their tyranny in his *Cromwell*. In an introduction he gives his reasons for this daring innovation. Following the *Carmagnola* came his second and last tragedy, the *Adelchi*. Meanwhile he had written his magnificent ode, *Il Cinque Maggio*, the subject of which was the death of Napoleon. It was at once translated by Goethe, was recognized by the French as the last word on the subject, and it was then that Manzoni began to be acknowledged as the head of the entire Romantic school. In 1825 he published his romance, *I Promessi Sposi*, known to all Italians and translated into all modern languages. Except for a few earlier poems, he only added to his works some essays on historical and religious subjects.

Manzoni had a very quiet and uneventful life. He was very fond of the country, and in the early spring of every year he left the city for his farm, whose labors he directed and shared. His life was, indeed, so peaceful, and his fate so happy, in contrast with that of Pellico and other literary contemporaries, that he was accused of indifference in political matters. "There are countries," says Monnier, "where it is a shame not to be persecuted." To this class belonged Manzoni.

"Goethe's praise," says a sneer which has been turned into a proverb, "is a brevet of mediocrity," and though Manzoni was anything but mediocre, he was in fact the only Italian who won the applause of the great German poet. Goethe could not praise Manzoni's tragedies too highly. "He did not find in them one word too much or too little, while the style was free, noble, full and rich." Yet they had no success on the stage. The *Car-*

magnola was given in Florence in 1828, but, in spite of the favor of the court, it failed; at Turin, where the *Adelchi* was brought out, Pellico regretted that the attempt had been made, and deplored the "vile irreverence of the public."

Both tragedies deal with patriotic themes, and both are concerned with remote occurrences. The time of the *Carmagnola* is the fifteenth century; that of the *Adelchi*, the eighth; and however strongly marked are the personages, differing widely in this respect from most characters of Italian classic tragedy, we still feel that they are subordinate to the great contests of elements and principles for which the dramas furnished a scene. The chief fault in Manzoni's works is that they are not acting plays, but their merits are much greater than the majority of such plays can boast. There are many affecting scenes, and the whole of each tragedy is conceived in the highest ideal of dramatic art.

Carmagnola.

In the *Carmagnola* the action extends from the moment when the Venetian senate, at war with the duke of Milan, places its armies under the command of the count, who is a soldier of fortune and has formerly been in the service of the duke. The senate sends two commissioners into his camp to represent the state there, and to be spies upon his conduct. This was a somewhat clumsy contrivance of the republic to give a patriotic character to its armies, which were often recruited from mercenaries and generaled by them; and,

of course, the hireling leaders must always have chafed under the surveillance. After the battle of Maclodio, in which the Venetian mercenaries defeated the Milanese, the victors, according to the custom of their trade, began to free their comrades of the other side whom they had taken prisoners. The commissioners protested, but Carmagnola answered that it was the usage of his soldiers and he could not forbid it; he went further, and himself liberated some remaining prisoners. His action was duly reported to the senate, and as he had formerly been in the service of the duke of Milan, whose kinswoman he had married, he was suspected of treason. He was invited to Venice and received with great honor, and conducted with every flattering ceremony to the hall of the Grand Council. After a brief delay, sufficient to exclude Carmagnola's followers, the doge ordered him to be seized, and upon a summary trial he was put to death.

In *Carmagnola* the interest of love is entirely wanting, and herein it differs very widely from Schiller's play of *Wallenstein's Camp,* which otherwise it much resembles. Manzoni's soldiers are simply soldiers, and this singleness of motive is in harmony with the Italian conception of art. Yet the Carmagnola of Manzoni is by no means like the heroes of the Alfierian tragedy. He is a man, not merely embodied passion or mood; his character is rounded and has all the checks and counterpoises, the inconsistencies, in a word, without which nothing actually lives in literature and hardly lives in the world.

The tragedy ends with a scene in the prison, where

Carmagnola awaits his wife and daughter, who are coming with one of his old comrades, Gonzaga, to bid him a last farewell. These passages present the poet in his tenderer moods.

Count.—(Speaking of his wife and daughter.) By this time
they must know my fate. Ah! why
Might I not die far from them? Dread, indeed,
Would be the news that reached them, but, at least,
The darkest hour of agony would be past,
And now it stands before us. We must needs
Drink the draught drop by drop. O open fields,
O liberal sunshine, O uproar of arms,
O joy of peril, O trumpets, and the cries
Of combatants. O my true steed! 'midst you
'T were fear to die; but now I go rebellious
To meet my destiny, driven to my doom
Like some vile criminal, uttering on the way
Impotent vows, and pitiful complaints.

* * * * * * * *

But I shall see my dear ones once again,
And, alas! hear their moans; the last adieu
Hear from their lips—shall find myself once more
Within their arms—then part from them forever.
They come! O God, bend down from heaven on them
One look of pity.

Enter Antonietta, Matilde and Gonzaga.

Antonietta.— My husband!

Matilde.— O my father!

Ant.—Ah, thus thou comest back! Is this the moment
So long desired?

Count.— O poor souls! Heaven knows
That only for your sake is it dreadful to me.
I who so long am used to look on death,
And to expect it, only for your sakes

Do I need courage. And you, you will not surely
Take it away from me? God, when he makes
Disaster fall on the innocent, he gives, too,
The heart to bear it. Ah! let yours be equal
To your affliction now! Let us enjoy
This last embrace—it likewise is Heaven's gift.
Daughter, thou weepest; and thou, wife! Oh, when
I chose thee mine, serenely did thy days
Glide on in peace; but made I thee companion
Of a sad destiny. And it is this thought
Embitters death to me. Would that I could not
See how unhappy I have made thee!

Ant.— O husband
Of my glad days, thou mad'st them glad! My heart,—
Yes, thou may'st read it!—I die of sorrow! Yet
I could not wish that I had not been thine.

Cou.—O love, I know how much I lose in thee:
Make me not feel it now too much.

Mat.— The murderers!

Cou.—No, no, my sweet Matilde; let not those
Fierce cries of hatred and of vengeance rise
From out thine innocent soul. Nay, do not mar
These moments; they are holy; the wrong's great,
But pardon it, and thou shalt see in 'midst of ills
A lofty joy remaining still. My death,
The cruelest enemy could do no more
Than hasten it. Oh surely men did never
Discover death, for they had made it fierce
And insupportable! It is from Heaven
That it doth come, and Heaven accompanies it,
Still with such comfort as men cannot give
Nor take away. O daughter and dear wife,
Hear my last words! All bitterly, I see,
They fall upon your hearts. But you one day will have
Some solace in remembering them together.
Dear wife, live thou; conquer thy sorrow, live;
Let not this poor girl utterly be orphaned.
Fly from this land, and quickly; to thy kindred
Take her with thee. She is their blood; to them

Thou once wast dear, and when thou didst become
Wife of their foe, only less dear; the cruel
Reasons of state have long time made adverse
The names of Carmagnola and Visconti;
But thou go'st back unhappy; the sad cause
Of hate is gone. Death's a great peacemaker!
And thou, my tender flower, that to my arms
Wast wont to come and make my spirit light,
Thou bow'st thy head? Aye, aye, the tempest roars
Above thee! Thou dost tremble, and thy breast
Is shaken with thy sobs. Upon my face
I feel thy burning tears fall down on me,
And cannot wipe them from thy tender eyes.
. . . Thou seem'st to ask
Pity of me, Matilda. Ah! thy father
Can do naught for thee. But there is in heaven,
There is a Father thou know'st for the forsaken;
Trust him and live on tranquil if not glad.

* * * * * * * *

Gonzaga, I offer thee this hand, which often
Thou hast pressed upon the morn of battle, when
We know not if we e'er should meet again:
Wilt press it now once more, and give to me
Thy faith that thou wilt be defence and guard
Of these poor women, till they are returned
Unto their kinsmen?

Gonzaga.— I do promise thee.

Cou.—When thou go'st back to camp,
Salute my brothers for me; and say to them
That I die innocent; witness thou hast been
Of all my deeds and thoughts—thou knowest it.
Tell them that I did never stain my sword
With treason—I did never stain it—and
I am betrayed.—And when the trumpets blow,
And when the banners beat against the wind,
Give thou a thought to thine old comrade then!
And on some mighty day of battle, when
Upon the field of slaughter the priest lifts
His hands amid the doleful noises, offering up
The sacrifice to heaven for the dead,

Bethink thyself of me, for I, too, thought
To die in battle.

Ant.— O God, have pity on us!

Cou.—O wife! Matilde! now the hour is near
We needs must part. Farewell!

Mat.— No, father——

Cou.— Yet
Once more, come to my heart! Once more, and now,
In mercy, go!

Ant.— Ah, no! they shall unclasp us
By force!

(A sound of armed men is heard without.)

Mat.—What sound is that?

Ant.— Almighty God!

(The door opens in the middle; armed men are seen. Their leader advances toward the count; the women swoon.)

Cou.—Merciful God! Thou hast removed from them
This cruel moment, and I thank Thee! Friend,
Succor them, and from this unhappy place
Bear them! And when they see the light again,
Tell them that nothing more is left to fear.

Some of the finest of Manzoni's lyrics are also to be found in his *Carmagnola* and *Adelchi*. It may, indeed, be said of these tragedies that they form of themselves an epoch in Italian literature, less for their intrinsic merit than as the first attempt to adapt Shakespearean methods to the Italian stage. The *Carmagnola* depicts the condottieri of the fifteenth century, and the *Adelchi* the Lombards of the eighth. The latter is the more dramatic, and the two principal characters, Adelchi and Ermengarda, are depicted with remarkable beauty and power. Both pieces are more like dramatic poems than tragedies, rising to their highest when there is most

scope for poetical imagination. Especially fine are the fire and spirit of the martial lyrics, with their "wonderful plunging metre." Very skilfully, also, is painted the lot of the Italian people, transferred by the fortune of war from a Lombard master to a Frank, and oppressed by both. The contemporary application is sufficiently evident, as will appear in the following verses:

From moss-covered ruin of edifice nameless,
From forests, from furnaces idle and flameless,
  From furrows bedewed with the sweat of the slave,
A people dispersed doth arouse and awaken,
With senses all straining and pulses all shaken,
  At a sound of strange clamor that swells like a wave.

In visages pallid, and eyes dim and shrouded,
As blinks the pale sun through a welkin beclouded,
  The might of their fathers a moment is seen
In eye and in countenance doubtfully blending,
The shame of the present seems doubly contending
  With pride in the thought of a past that hath been.

Now they gather in hope to disperse panic-stricken,
And in tortuous ways their pace slacken or quicken,
  As 'twixt longing and fear they advance or stand still,
Gazing once and again where, despairing and scattered,
The host of their tyrants flies broken and shattered
  From the wrath of the swords that are drinking their fill.

As wolves that the hunter hath cowed and subjected,
Their hair on their hides in dire horror erected,
  So these to their covert distractedly fly;
And hope springs anew in the breast of the peasant;
O'ertaking the future in joy of the present,
  He deems his chain broken, and broken for aye.

Nay, hearken! Yon heroes in victory warring,
From refuge and rescue the routed debarring,
  By path steep and rugged have come from afar,
Forsaking the halls of their festive carousing,
From downy repose on soft couches arousing,
  In haste to obey the shrill summons of war.

They have left in their castles their wives broken-hearted,
Who, striving to part, still refused to be parted,
  With pleadings and warnings that died on the tongue.
The war-dinted helmet the brow hath surmounted,
And soon the dark chargers are saddled and mounted,
  And hollow the bridge to their gallop hath rung.

From land unto land they have speeded and fleeted,
With lips that the lay of the soldier repeated,
  But hearts that have harbored their home and its bowers.
They have watched, they have starved, by grim discipline driven,
And hauberk and helm have been battered and riven,
  And arrows around them have whistled in showers.

And deem ye, poor fools! that the meed and the guerdon
That lured from afar were to lighten your burden,
  Your wrongs to abolish, your fate to reverse?
Go back to the wrecks of your palaces stately,
To the forges whose glow ye extinguished so lately,
  To the field ye have tilled in the sweat of your curse!

The victor and vanquished, in amity knitted,
Have doubled the yoke to your shoulders refitted;
  One tyrant had quelled you, and now ye have twain.
They cast forth the lot for the serf and the cattle,
They throng on the sods that yet bleed from their battle,
  And the soil and the hind are their servants again.

Manzoni's claim to universal veneration was threefold. In the first place, he was really a great writer; in the

second, he was the standard-bearer of Italian literature, the one contemporary author of his nation who could be named along with Goethe and Byron; thirdly and chiefly, he represented the most important intellectual movement of the post-Napoleon age—the romantic and mediæval reaction. The middle age was, indeed, no model for the nineteenth century, as the romanticists and reactionaries thought, but it possessed elements indispensable for the enrichment of the national life; and no Italian could forget that the greatest of his countrymen was also the greatest and most representative writer of the mediæval era.

VII.

Recent and Contemporary Drama.

For at least half a century after the downfall of Napoleon I the history of European literature is largely that of writers and writings contending with despotic governments and the various sinister interests which strove to restore the condition of affairs prevailing before the French revolution. In all ages and countries literature has usually been on the side of freedom, which is to it as the breath of life, and men of letters, except those who prostitute their talents, are, by instinct, partisans of liberty. Many of the world's most famous authors, while their political principles might favor a reactionary tendency, did not encourage it in their writings. Scott, Coleridge, Goethe and Chateaubriand, for instance, though reactionary in politics, were, in their literary spheres, innovators and iconoclasts, showing no leaning toward the perpetuation of the ancient régime of church and state. Niebuhr sincerely deplored the tendency of the times, but by proving the legendary character of the early history of Rome, did more to unsettle allegiance to tradition than all the wit and malice of Heine. Thus the literature of the nineteenth cen-

tury, after its opening decades, was a powerful liberating force, and at the same time favorable to sound conservatism.

Patriotic Literature.

In Italy literature was unequivocably on the side of liberty, but its expression was more restrained than elsewhere, for Italian writers could only obtain liberty of speech at the price of exile. Yet love of country is always the dominant thought, which colors it throughout, as the soil colors the flowers. In addition to the names already mentioned, there was a host of less prominent authors, who were animated with patriotic feelings, and it is rather this pervading tone than any remarkable excellence that gives dignity to recent Italian literature. The one apparent exception was rather seeming than real. The Catholic reaction, which followed the revolution almost as a necessary consequence, was not considered by men of letters as illiberal or unpatriotic. Many of the most eminent writers were fervent Catholics.

When later the school of Romantic poets and novelists was practically dispersed by the Austrian police, the literary spirit of the nation took refuge under the mild and careless despotism of the grand dukes of Florence. In 1821 Austria was mistress of nearly all of Italy. She held in her grasp the provinces of Lombardy and Venetia; she had garrisons in Naples, Piedmont and the Romagna, and Rome was ruled according to her will. But there is always something defective in the vigilance of a policeman; and in the

very place which, perhaps, Austria thought it quite needless to guard, the restless and indomitable spirit of free thought entered. It was in Tuscany, a fief of the Holy Roman Empire, reigned over by a family set on the grand-ducal throne by Austria herself, and united to her Hapsburgs by many ties, that a new literary life began for Italy. The Leopoldine code was especially mild toward criminals, and the Lorrainaise princes did not show themselves crueler than they could help toward poets, essayists and that class of malefactors. Indeed, it was the policy of their family to leave matters alone, and the grand duke, restored after the fall of Napoleon, while he was an absolute monarch, was also an honest man. Though there were spies and a censorship in Florence, there was also indulgence, and if it was not altogether a pleasant place for literary men it was at least tolerable, and there they gathered from their exile and their silence throughout Italy.

Niccolini.

Giambattista Niccolini, born in 1782, near Pistoja, was of poor but noble parentage. After leaving school, he continued his studies in the university of Pisa, and soon showed himself a poet. His first tragedies, five or six in number, were written in the classic style of Alfieri, but though all were popular at the time, only one—the *Medea*—survived. While still a youth, he attracted the attention of Ugo Foscolo, who dedicated to him one of his works.

Niccolini's first political tragedy was his *Nebuchad-*

nezzar, which was printed in London in 1819, and figured, under that scriptural disguise, the career of Napoleon. It was followed by *Antonio Foscarini*, in which the author, who had heretofore been a classicist, tried to reconcile that school with the Romantic by violating the sacred unities. His next drama, *Ludovico il Moro*, is in many respects a touching and effective tragedy, carefully preserving the historical truth, though we cannot entirely relish the extravagance of its high patriotic flavor.

Giovanni da Procida.

In his *Giovanni da Procida* Niccolini set himself to the purpose of awakening a Tuscan hatred of foreign rule. The subject is the expulsion of the French from Sicily, and its first representations raised the Florentines to a frenzy of theatrical patriotism. The tragedy ends with the Sicilian Vespers, but is chiefly concerned with preceding events, largely imagined by the poet, and the historical persons are more or less historically painted. Giovanni da Procida, a great Sicilian nobleman, supposed to be dead by the French, comes home to Palermo, after long exile, to stir up the Sicilians to rebellion, and finds that his daughter is married to the son of one of the French rulers, though neither his daughter, Imelda, nor her husband, Tancredi, knew the origin of the latter at the time of their marriage. Procida, in his all-absorbing hate of the oppressors, cannot forgive them; yet he saves Tancredi's life from an impending massacre of the French by imprisoning him in his castle, and in a scene with Imelda he tells her

that, while she was a babe, the father of Tancredi had abducted her mother and carried her to France. Years afterward she returned heart-broken to die in her husband's arms, a secret which she tries to reveal perishing with her. While Imelda remains horror-struck at this disclosure, Procida receives an intercepted letter from Tancredi's father, in which he tells the young man that he and Imelda are children of the same mother. Procida, in pity of the victim of this awful fatality, prepares to send her away to a convent in Pisa, but a French law forbids any ship to sail at that time, and Imelda is brought back and confronted in a public place with Tancredi, who has been rescued by the French. He claims her as his wife, but she, filled with horror of what she knows, declares that he is not her husband. It is the moment of the Vespers, and Tancredi falls among the first slain by the Sicilians. He implores Imelda for a last kiss, but wildly answering that they are brother and sister, she swoons away, while Tancredi dies in this climax of despair.

The management of the plot is very simple, and the feelings of the characters in the hideous maze which involves them are given only such expression as should come from those utterly broken by their calamity. Imelda swoons when she hears the fatal tie of blood that binds her to her husband. When she is restored she finds her father weeping over her and says:

> Ah, thou dost look on me
> And weep! At least this comfort I can feel
> In the horror of my state: thou canst not hate
> A woman so unhappy.

Oh, from all
Be hid the atrocity! to take some holy shelter
Let me be taken far from hence. I feel
Naught can be more than my calamity,
Saving God's pity. I have no father now,
Nor child, nor husband (heavens, what do I say?
He is my brother now! and well I know
I must not ask to see him more). I, living, lose
Everything death robs other women of.

Niccolini does not often use pathos, and he is on that account perhaps the more effective in the use of it. Very touching is the passage where, after coming back from his long exile, Procida says to Imelda, who is trembling for the secret of her marriage amid her joy in his return:

Daughter, art thou still
So sad? I have not yet heard from thy lips
A word of the old love. . . .
. . . Ah, thou knowest not
What sweetness hath the natal spot, how many
The longings exile hath; how heavy 'tis
To arrive at doors of homes where no one waits thee!
Melda, thou may'st abandon thine own land,
But not forget her; I, a pilgrim, saw
Many a city; but none among them had
A memory that spoke unto my heart;
And fairer still than any other seemed
The country whither still my spirit turned.

In a vein as fierce and passionate as this is tender, Procida relates how, returning to Sicily when he was believed dead by the French, he passed in secret over the island and inflamed Italian hatred of the foreigners:

I sought the pathless woods,
And drew the cowards thence, and made them blush,
And then made fury follow on their shame.
I hailed the peasant in his fertile fields,
Where 'neath the burden of the cruel tribute,
He dropped from famine 'midst the harvest sheaves,
With his starved brood: "Open thou with thy scythe
The breasts of Frenchmen; let the earth no more
Be fertile to our tyrants." I found my way
In palaces, in hovels; tranquil, I
Both great and lowly did make drunk with rage.
I knew the art to call forth cruel tears
In every eye, to wake in every heart
A love of slaughter, a ferocious need
Of blood. And in a thousand strong right hands
Glitter the arms I gave.

"With this tragedy," says an Italian biographer of Niccolini, "the poet touched all chords of the human heart, from the most impassioned love to the most implacable hate. The enthusiasm rose to the greatest height, and for as many nights of the severe winter of 1830 as the tragedy was given, the theatre was always thronged by an overflowing audience, the doors being opened to the impatient people many hours before the spectacle began. Spectators thought themselves fortunate to secure a seat next to the roof of the playhouse; even in the prompter's hole—on the Italian stage the prompter rises from a hole behind the foot-lights, hidden by a canvas screen—places were sought to witness the admired work. And while they wept over the ill-starred love of Imelda, and all hearts palpitated in the touching situation in the drama—where the public and the personal interests so wonderfully blended, and the

vengeance of a people mingled with that of a man outraged in the most sacred affections of the heart—Procida rose terrible as the billows of his sea, imprecating before all the wrongs of their oppressed country, in whatever servitude inflicted, by whatever aliens, among all those that had trampled, derided and martyred her, and raising the cry of resistance that stirred the heart of all Italy. At the picture of the abject sufferings of their common country, the whole audience rose and repeated with tears of rage:

> Why should heaven smile so glorious over
> The land of our infamous woes?

Arnaldo da Brescia.

In 1843 Niccolini published his great tragedy, *Arnaldo da Brescia*, which was a response to the ideas of the papal school of patriots. After *Arnaldo* came the *Filippo Strozzi, Beatrice Cenci,* a version of Shelley's drama, and *Mario e i Cimbri.*

Arnaldo was performed in Florence in 1858, almost on the eve of the war which established Italian freedom. The name of Cocomero theatre had been changed to the Teatro Niccolini, and, in spite of governmental anxiety and opposition, the occasion was made a popular demonstration in favor of Niccolini and his ideas. His biographer says: "The audience now maintained a religious silence; now, moved by irresistible force, broke out into uproarious applause as the eloquent protests of the friar and the insolent responses of the pope awak-

ened their interest; for Italy then, like the unhappy martyr, had risen to proclaim the decline of that monstrous power which, in the name of a religion profaned by it, sanctifies its own illegitimate and feudal origin, its abuses, its pride, its vices, its crimes. It was a beautiful and affecting spectacle to see the illustrious poet receiving the warm congratulations of his fellow-citizens, who enthusiastically recognized in him the utterer of so many lofty truths and the prophet of Italy. That night Niccolini was accompanied to his house by the applauding multitude." All this may have been only such honor as the Florentines were accustomed to pay to a pretty ballerina or a successful prima donna; but the worth of the poet was not lessened by the cheapening of popular applause. The two remaining years of Niccolini's life were passed in retirement, and with a sense of satisfaction with the fortunes of Italy marred only by the fact that the French still remained in Rome and that the temporal power of the pope had not been abolished.

In *Arnaldo da Brescia* Niccolini has poured out all the lifelong hatred and distrust he had felt for the temporal power of the popes. This we shall best understand through a sketch of the life of Arnaldo, who is really one of the most heroic figures of the past, deserving to rank far above Savonarola, and with the leaders of the Reformation, though he preceded these nearly four hundred years. He was born in Brescia of Lombardy about the year 1105, and was partly educated in France, in the school of the famous Abelard. He early embraced the ecclesiastical life, and, when he

returned to his own country, entered a convent, but not to waste his time in idleness and the corruptions of his order. In fact, he began at once to preach against these, and against the usurpation of temporal power by all the great and little dignitaries of the church. He thus identified himself with the democratic side in politics, which was then locally arrayed against the bishop aspiring to rule Brescia. Arnaldo denounced the political power of the pope, as well as that of the prelates; and the bishop, making this known to the pontiff at Rome, had sufficient influence to procure a sentence against Arnaldo as a schismatic, and an order enjoining silence upon him. He was also banished from Italy, whereupon, retiring to France, he got himself into further trouble by aiding Abelard in the defence of his teachings, which had been attainted of heresy.

Both Abelard and Arnaldo were at this time bitterly persecuted by St. Bernard, and Arnaldo took refuge in Switzerland, whence, after several years, he passed to Rome, and there began to assume an active part in the popular movements against the papal rule. He was an ardent republican, and was a useful and efficient partisan, teaching openly that, while the pope was to be respected in all spiritual things, he was not to be recognized at all as a temporal prince. When the English monk, Nicholas Breakspear, became Pope Adrian IV, he excommunicated and banished Arnaldo; but Arnaldo, protected by the senate and certain powerful nobles, remained at Rome in spite of the pope's decree, and disputed the lawfulness of the excommunication. Finally, the whole city was laid under interdict until

Arnaldo should be driven out. Holy week was drawing near; the people were eager to have their churches thrown open and to witness the usual shows and splendors, and they consented to the exile of their leader. The followers of a cardinal arrested him, but he was rescued by his friends, certain counts of the Campagna, who regarded him as a saint, and who now lodged him safely in one of their castles. The emperor Frederick Barbarossa, coming to Rome to assume the imperial crown, was met by embassies from both parties in the city. He warmly favored that of the pope, and not only received that of the people very coldly, but arrested one of the counts who had rescued Arnaldo, and forced him to name the castle in which the monk lay concealed. Arnaldo was then given into the hands of the cardinals, and these delivered him to the prefect of Rome, who caused him to be hanged, his body to be burned upon a spit, and his ashes to be scattered in the Tiber, that the people might not venerate his relics as those of a saint.

The scene of the first act of Niccolini's tragedy is near the Capitoline hill, in Rome, where two rival leaders are disputing in the midst of their adherents. When the people ask what cure there is for their troubles, Arnaldo answers:

Liberty and God.
A voice from the orient,
A voice from the occident,
A voice from thy deserts,
A voice of echoes from the open graves,
Accuses thee, thou shameless harlot! Drunk
Art thou with blood of saints, and thou hast lain

With all the kings of earth. Ah, you behold her!
She is clothed on with purple; gold and pearls
And gems are heaped upon her; and her vestments
Once white, the pleasure of her former spouse,
That's now in heaven, she has dragged in dust.
Lo, is she full of names and blasphemies,
And on her brow is written Mystery!

The people ask Arnaldo what he counsels them to do, and he advises them to restore the senate and the tribunes, appealing to the glorious memories of the place where they stand, the Capitoline hill:

Where the earth calls at every step, "Oh, pause,
Thou treadest on a hero!"

They desire to make him a tribune, but he refuses, promising, however, that he will not withhold his counsel. While he speaks some cardinals, with nobles of the papal party, appear and announce the election of the new pope, Adrian. "What is his name?" the people demand, and a cardinal answers, "Breakspear, a Briton."

Arnaldo.— I never care to ask
Where popes are born; and from long suffering,
You, Romans, before heaven, should have learnt
That priests can have no country. . . .
I know this man; his father was a thrall,
And he is fit to be a slave. He made
Friends with the Norman that enslaves his country;
A wandering beggar to Avignon's cloisters
He came in boyhood and was known to do
All abject services; there those false monks
He with astute humility cajoled;
He learned their arts, and 'mid intrigues and hates

He rose at last out of his native filth
A tyrant of the vile.

The cardinals, confounded by Arnaldo's presence and invectives, withdraw, but leave one of their party to work on the fears of the Romans and make them return to their allegiance by pictures of the desolating war which Barbarossa, now approaching Rome to support Adrian, has waged upon the rebellious Lombards at Rosate and elsewhere. Arnaldo replies:

Romans,
I will tell all the things that he has hid;
I know not how to cheat you. Yes, Rosate
A ruin is, from which the smoke ascends.
The bishop, lord of Monferrato, guided
The German arms against Chieri and Asti,
Now turned to dust; that shepherd pitiless
Did thus avenge his own offenses on
His flying flocks; himself with torches armed
The German hand; houses and churches saw
Destroyed, and gave his blessing on the flames.
This is the pardon that you may expect
From mitered tyrants. A heap of ashes now
Crowneth the hill where once Tortona stood;
And drunken with her wine and with her blood
Fallen there amid their spoil upon the dead,
Slept the wild beasts of Germany; like ghosts
Dim wandering through the darkness of the night,
Those that were left by famine and the sword,
Hidden within the heart of thy dim caverns,
Desolate city! rose and turned their steps
Noiselessly toward compassionate Milan.
There they have borne their swords and hopes: I see
A thousand heroes born from the example
Tortona gave. O city, if I could,
O sacred city! upon thy ruins fall

Reverently, and take them in my loving arms,
The relics of thy brave I'd gather up
In precious urns, and from the altars here
In days of battle offer to be kissed!
Oh, praise be to the Lord! Men die no more
For chains and errors; martyrs now at last
Hast thou, O holy Freedom; and fain were I
Ashes for thee!—But I see you grow pale,
Ye Romans! Down, go down; this holy height
Is not for cowards. In the valley there
Your tyrant waits you; go and fall before him
And cover his haughty foot with tears and kisses.
He'll tread you in the dust, and then absolve you.

The People.—The arms we have are strange and few.
Our walls
Are fallen and ruinous.

Arnaldo.— Their hearts are walls
Unto the brave. . . .
And they shall rise again,
The walls that blood of freemen has baptized,
But among slaves their ruins are eternal.

The Peo.—You outrage us, sir!

Arn.— Wherefore do ye tremble
Before the trumpet sounds? O thou that wast
Once the world's lord and first in Italy,
Wilt thou now be the last?

The Peo.—No more! Cease, or thou diest!

After having roused the pride of the Romans, Arnaldo tells them that two thousand Swiss have followed him from his exile, and the act closes with some lyrical passages tending to the fraternization of the two parties.

In the second act the characters of Cardinal Guido and Pope Adrian are finely drawn, the former, who is the very type of ecclesiastical submission, showing not more faith in the sacredness of the latter than Adrian,

the type of ecclesiastical ambition, has in himself. The pope expresses his ardent desire to bring Arnaldo back to his allegiance, and when Guido reminds him that Arnaldo has been condemned by a council of the church and that it is hardly in his power to restore him, Adrian turns upon the cardinal:

> What sayest thou?
> I can do all. Dare the audacious members
> Rebel against the head? Within these hands
> Lie not the keys that once were given to Peter?
> The heavens repeat as 'twere the word of God,
> My word that here has power to loose or bind.
> Arnaldo did not dare so much. The kingdom
> Of earth alone he did deny me. Thou
> Art more outside the church than he.

Guido humbly sues for pardon and then withdraws, at the pope's bidding, to send a message to Arnaldo, whereupon Adrian utters the following soliloquy:

> At every step by which I've hither climbed
> I've found a sorrow; but upon the summit
> All sorrows are; and thorns more thickly spring
> Around my chair than ever round a throne.
> What weary toil to keep up from the dust
> This mantle that's weighed down the strongest limbs!
> These splendid gems that blaze in my tiara,
> They are a fire that burns the aching brow
> I left with many tears, O Lord, to thee!
> Yet I must fear not; He that did know how
> To bear the cross, so heavy with the sins
> Of all the world, will succor the weak servant
> That represents his power here on earth.
> O silences of the cloister, O ye mists
> Of mine own isle that make the light o' the sun
> Obscure as one day was my lot, amidst

The furious tumults of this guilty Rome,
Here, under the superb effulgency
Of burning skies, I think of you and weep!

Arnaldo appears before the pope, who bids him kneel down and kiss his feet, and speak to him as to God. He will receive him only as a penitent, but Arnoldo says:

The feet
Of his disciples did that meek one kiss
Whom here thou representest. But I hear
Now from thy lips the voice of fiercest pride.
Repent, O Peter, that deniest him,
And near the tempter art, but far from God!
* * * * * * * *
Why seek'st thou empire here, and great on earth
Art mean in heaven? Ah! vainly in thy prayer
Thou criest, "Let the heart be lifted up!"
'Tis ever bowed to earth.
* * * * * * * *
Now, then, if thou wilt,
Put forth the power that thou dost vaunt; repress
The crimes of bishops, make the church ashamed
To be a stepmother to the poor and lowly.
In all the Lombard cities every priest
Has grown a despot, in shrewd perfidy.
Now siding with the church, now with the empire,
They have dainty food, magnificent apparel,
Lascivious joys.

In the same strain he proceeds for thirty or forty lines further, concluding:

Tell me, Adrian,
Must thou not bear a burden that were heavy
Even for angels? Wherefore wilt thou join
Death unto life, and make the word of God,

That says "My kingdom is not of this world,"
A lie? Oh, follow Christ's example here
In Rome; it pleased both God and her
To abase the proud and to uplift the weak.
I'll kiss the foot that treads on kings!

Adrian answers, haughtily:

Arnaldo,
I parley not, I rule; and I, become
On earth as God in heaven, am judge of all,
And none of me; I watch, and I dispense
Terrors and hopes, rewards and punishments,
To peoples and to kings; fountain and source
Of life am I, who make the church of God
One and all-powerful.

Finally the pope tells Arnaldo that if he will renounce his false doctrine and leave Rome he will, through him, give the Lombard cities a measure of liberty that shall not offend the church. But Arnaldo refuses and the interview comes to an end.

Then follows a scene in which Cardinal Guido, sent by the pope to disperse a popular assembly, is stoned to death by the people. He dies full of faith in the church and the righteousness of his cause, and his body is carried into the square before St. Peter's. A throng of people, including many women, has followed the bier, but the pope repels them from the church door and proclaims the interdict. Then follow some lyrical passages in which Adrian commands the pictures and images to be veiled and the relics to be concealed, and curses the enemies of the church. The following is a

rhymeless translation, but one that is far from reproducing the power of the original:

The Pope.—To-day let the perfidious
Learn at thy name to tremble,
Nor triumph o'er the ruinous
Place of thy vanished altars.
Oh, brief be their days and uncertain;
In the desert their wandering footsteps,
Every tremulous leaflet affright them!

The Cardinals.—Anathema, anathema, anathema!

Pope.—May their widows sit down 'mid the ashes
On the hearths of their desolate houses,
With their little ones wailing around them.

Card.—Anathema, anathema, anathema!

Pope.—May he, who was born to the fury
Of heaven, afar from his country
Be lost in his ultimate anguish.

Card.—Anathema, anathema, anathema!

Pope.—May he fly to the house of the alien oppressor
That is filled with the spoil of his brothers, with women
Destroyed by the pitiless hands that defiled them;
There in accents unknown and derided, abase him
At portals ne'er opened in mercy, imploring
A morsel of bread.

Card.— Be that morsel denied him!

Pope.—I hear the wicked cry: I from the Lord
Will fly away with swift and tireless feet;
His anger follows me upon the sea;
I'll seek the desert; who will give me wings?
In cloudy horror, who shall lead my steps?
The eye of God maketh the night as day.
O brothers, fulfil, then,
The terrible duty;
Throw down from the altars
The dim-burning tapers;
And be all joy, and be the love of God
In thankless hearts that know not Peter, quenched,

As is the little flame that falls and dies,
Here in these tapers trampled under foot.

In the third act Arnaldo appears in a desolate place in the Campagna, near the sea. He has been expelled from Rome by the people eager for the opening of their churches, and soliloquizes on his fate in language that subtly hints all his passing moods and paints the struggle of his soul:

Like this sand
Is life itself, and evermore each path
Is traced in suffering, and one footprint still
Obliterates another; and we are all
Vain shadows here that seem a little while,
And suffer, and pass. Let me not fight in vain,
O Son of God, with thine immortal word,
Yon tyrant of eternity and time,
Who doth usurp thy place on earth, whose feet
Are in the depths, whose head is in the clouds,
Who thunders all abroad, The world is mine!
Laws, virtues, liberty I have attempted
To give thee, Rome. Ah! only where death is
Abides thy glory. Here the laurel only
Flourishes on the ruins and the tombs.
I will repose upon this fallen column
My weary limbs. Ah, lower than this ye lie,
You Latin souls, and to your ancient height
Who shall uplift you? I am all weighted down
By the great trouble of the lofty hopes
Of Italy still deluded, and I find
Within my soul a drearer desert far
Than this, where the air already darkens round,
And the soft notes of distant convent bells
Announce the coming night. . . . I cannot hear them
Without a trembling wish that in my heart
Wakens a memory that becomes remorse. . . .
Ah, Reason, soon thou languishest in us,

Accustomed to such outrage all our lives.
Thou know'st the cloister; thou a youth didst enter
That sepulchre of the living where is war,—
Remember it and shudder! The damp wind
Stirs this gray hair. I'm near the sea. O night,
Thy silence is no more; sweet on the ear
Cometh the far-off murmur of the floods
In the vast desert; now no more the darkness
Imprisons wholly; now less gloomily
Lowers the sky that lately threatened storm.
Less thick the air is, and the trembling light
O' the stars among the breaking clouds appear.
Praise to the Lord! The eternal harmony
Of all his work I feel. Though these vague beams
Reveal to me here only fens and tombs,
My soul is not so heavily weighted down
By burdens that oppressed it. . . .
I rise to grander purposes: man's tents
Are here below, his city is in heaven.
I doubt no more; the terror of the cloister
No longer assails me.

When we are brought into the presence of Barbarossa we find him awaiting the arrival of Adrian, who is to accompany him to Rome and crown him emperor, in return for the aid that Barbarossa shall give in reducing the rebellious citizens and delivering Arnaldo into the power of the papacy. Heralds come to announce Adrian's approach, and, riding forth a little way, Frederick dismounts in order to go forward on foot and meet the pope, who advances, preceded by his clergy, and attended by a multitude of his partisans.

Since the time of Henry II it had been the custom of the emperors to lead the pope's horse by the bridle, and to hold his stirrup while he descended. Adrian waits in vain for this homage from Frederick, and then

alights, with the help of his ministers, and seats himself in his episcopal chair, while Frederick draws near, saying, aside:

> **I read there in his face his insolent pride**
> **Veiled by humility.**

He bows before Adrian and kisses his foot, and then offers him the kiss of peace, which Adrian refuses, and haughtily reminds him of the fate of Henry. Frederick answers furiously that the thought of this fate has always filled him with hatred of the papacy, and Adrian, perceiving that he has pressed too far in this direction, says to the emperor:

> **I am truth,**
> **And thou art force, and if thou part'st from me,**
> **Blind thou becomest, helpless I remain.**
> **We are but one at last. . . .**
> **Cæsar and Peter,**
> **They are the heights of God; man from the earth**
> **Contemplates them with awe, and never questions**
> **Which thrusts its peak the higher into heaven.**
> **Therefore be wise, and learn from the example**
> **Of impious Arnaldo. He's the foe**
> **Of thrones who wars upon the altar.**

But he strives in vain to persuade Frederick to the despised act of homage, and it is only at the intercession of the emperor's kinsmen and the German princes that he consents to it. When it is done in the presence of all the army and the clerical retinue, Adrian mounts, and says to Frederick, with scarcely hidden irony:

> **In truth thou art**
> **An apt and ready squire, and thou hast held**

My stirrup firmly. Take, then, O my son,
The kiss of peace, for thou hast well fulfilled
All of thy duties.

But Frederick, crying aloud, and fixing the eyes of the multitude upon him, answers:

Nay, not all, O Father!—
Princes and soldiers, hear! I have done homage
To Peter, not to him.

The church and the empire being now reconciled, Frederick receives the ambassadors of the Roman republic with scorn; he outrages all their pretentions to restore Rome to her old freedom and renown; insults their prayer that he will make her his capital, and heaps contempt upon the weakness and vileness of the people they represent. Giordano replies for them:

When will you dream,
You Germans, in your thousand stolid dreams,—
The fume of drunkenness,—a future greater
Than our Rome's memories? Never be her banner
Usurped by you! In prison and in darkness
Was born your eagle, that did but descend
Upon the helpless prey of Roman dead,
But never dared to try the ways of heaven,
With its weak vision wounded by the sun.
Ye prate of Germany. The whole world conspired,
And even more in vain, to work us harm,
Before that day when, the world being conquered,
Rome slew herself.

The soldiers of Barbarossa press upon Giordano to kill him, and Frederick saves the ambassadors with difficulty and hurries them away.

In the first part of the fifth act, Niccolini deals again with the rôle which woman has played in the tragedy of Italian history, the hopes she has defeated and the plans she has marred through those religious instincts which should have blessed her country, but which, through their perversion by priestcraft, have been one of its greatest curses. Adrian is in the Vatican, after his triumphant return to Rome, when Adelasia, the wife of Ostasio, count of the Campagna, in whose castle Arnaldo is concealed, and who shares his excommunication, is ushered into the pope's presence. She is half mad with terror at the penalties under which her husband has fallen, in days when the excommunicated were shunned like lepers, and to shelter them, or to eat and drink with them, even to salute them, was to incur privation of the sacraments; when a bier was placed at their door and their houses were stoned; when King Robert, of France, who fell under the anathema, was abandoned by all his courtiers and servants, and the beggars refused the meat that was left from his table—and she comes into Adrian's presence accusing herself as the greatest of sinners. The pope asks:

Hast thou betrayed
Thy husband, or from some yet greater crime
Cometh the terror that oppresses thee?
Hast slain him?

Adelasia.— Haply I ought to slay him.

Adrian.— What?

Ade.—I fain would hate him and I cannot.

Adr.— What
Hath his fault been?

Ade.— Oh, the most horrible
Of all.

Adr.— And yet is he dear unto thee?

Ade.—I love him, yes, I love him, though he's changed
From that he was. Some gloomy cloud involves
That face one day so fair, and 'neath the feet,
Now grown deformed, the flowers wither away.
I know not if I sleep or if I wake,
If what I see be a vision or a dream.
But all is dreadful, and I cannot tell
The falsehood from the truth; for if I reason,
I fear to sin. I fly the happy bed
Where I became a mother, but return
In midnight's horror, where my husband lies
Wrapt in a sleep so deep it frightens me,
And question with my trembling hand his heart,
The fountain of his life, if it still beat.
Then a cold kiss I give him, then embrace him
With shuddering joy, and then I fly again,—
For I do fear his love,—and to the place
Where sleep my little ones I hurl myself,
And wake them with my moans, and drag them forth
Before an old miraculous shrine of her,
The Queen of Heaven, to whom I've consecrated,
With never-ceasing vigils, burning lamps.
There naked, stretched upon the hard earth, weep
My pretty babes, and each of them repeats
The name of Mary whom I call upon;
And I would swear that she looks down and weeps.
Then I cry out, "Have pity on my children!
Thou wast a mother, and the good obtain
Forgiveness for the guilty."

Adrian has little trouble to draw from the distracted woman the fact that her husband is a heretic—that heretic, indeed, in whose castle Arnaldo is concealed. On his promise that he will save her husband, she tells him the name of the castle. He summons Frederick,

who claims Ostasio as his vassal, and declares that he shall die, and his children shall be carried to Germany. Adrian, after coldly asking the Emperor to spare him, feigns himself helpless, and Adelasia too late awakens to a knowledge of his perfidy. She falls at his feet:

> I clasp thy knees once more, and I do hope
> Thou hast not cheated me! . . . Ah, now I see
> Thy wicked arts! Because thou knewest well
> My husband was a vassal of the empire,
> That pardon which it was not thine to give
> Thou didst pretend to promise me. O priest,
> Is this thy pity? Sorrow gives me back
> My wandering reason, and I waken on
> The brink of an abyss; and from this wretch
> The mask that did so hide his face drops down
> And shows it in its naked hideousness
> Unto the light of truth.

Frederick sends his soldiers to secure Arnaldo, but as to Ostasio and his children he relents somewhat, being touched by the anguish of Adelasia. Adrian rebukes his weakness, saying that he learned in the cloister to subdue these compassionate impulses. In the next scene, which is on the Capitoline hill, the Roman senate resolves to defend the city against the Germans to the last, and then we have Arnaldo a prisoner in a cell of the castle of St. Angelo. The prefect of Rome vainly entreats him to recant his heresy, and then leaves him with the announcement that he is to die before the following day. We leave Arnaldo in his prison, and it is supposed that he is put to death during the combat that follows between the Germans and Romans immediately after the coronation of Frederick.

Such is a brief outline of Niccolini's great tragedy, in which he poured forth all the bitterness of his hatred and scorn for the temporal power of the popes. If we consider the grandeur of its plan, and how it employs for its effect the evil and the perverted good of the time in which the scene was laid, how it accords perfect sincerity to all the great actors—to the pope as well as to Arnaldo, to the emperor as well as to the leaders of the people—we must admit that its conception is that of a very great artist. Nor is the execution less to be admired. We cannot judge it by the narrow rule which the tragedies of the stage must obey; rather must we look at it with the liberal imagination to which a great fiction appeals. Then the patience, the subtlety, the strength with which each character, individual and typical, is evolved; the picturesqueness with which every event is presented; the lyrical sweetness and beauty with which so many passages are enriched, will all be apparent, and we shall realize the æsthetic sublimity of the work as well as its moral force and its political significance.

Pietro Cossa.

In the recent drama one name stands forth preëminently—that of Pietro Cossa, among whose numerous historical tragedies the most remarkable are *Cleopatre, Messalina, Nero, Julian the Apostate, Cola di Rienzi* and the *Borgias*. Cossa is more of a playwright than a poet, though excelling in versification, rhetoric and masculine strength, the last a rare quality on the Italian stage. His scenes are always powerful; his

action never halts or lingers; there is never any doubt as to the author's intention, and the language is energetic without any trace of bombast. But in the higher regions of art his shortcomings are very apparent. He has little creative power, his only felicitous inventions being of minor characters, and he rarely ventures to travel beyond the beaten path in the delineation of historic personages. He has no penetration, no subtlety and little insight into character, which he usually takes at second hand. As conventional types, however, his characters are brilliantly drawn, if sometimes overelaborated with excessive details, as though he could not bear to part with them. If he has produced no great dramatic work, he has at least given us some very fine historical masquerades. In his single comedy, entitled *Plautus and His Age,* Cossa has drawn a lively picture of Roman society. Other compositions worthy of note are the tragedies of Cavallotti, the New Testament trilogy of Giuseppe Bovio and the comedies of Roberto Bracco and Giacinto Gallina.

D'Annunzio.

Among living dramatists Gabriele d'Annunzio occupies a high place and is one of the few Italian authors whose works have found a foothold in other European countries. In the United States his plays, and especially his *Francesca da Rimini,* are well known; but they are not popular, for they are not adapted to American audiences, which desire to be amused, care little for tragedy, do not want to be instructed, and, above

all, will not be bored. A local critic says of *Giocanda* as performed in Philadelphia in 1902 with Duse as the heroine: "It is not an attractive play; it is not a dramatically effective play, so far as the purposes of the drama are concerned, being sombre almost through its entire length of the four acts, and varying only from the representation of annoyance to that of horror." A play which begins with a suicide, progressing through pain and distress to an irretrievably disastrous close, unrelieved by a single touch of humor or pleasantry, can never be made attractive to an American audience. Unmitigated human suffering, undeserved and uncompensating, may be endured by the play-going public of Europe, but it will never be acceptable on this side of the Atlantic. Even less satisfactory was *La Citta Morta,* or *The Dead City,* presented the following night, with its hideous story of the incestuous love of brother and sister. In his dramas D'Annunzio would seem to have sounded all the depths of human depravity, so that he has no further message to send us, or, if he has, let us hope that he will spare us the infliction.

VIII.

The Italian Stage and Actors.

The lyric stage in Italy takes precedence of the dramatic, and in the large cities the production of a new opera is considered a national event, forming for many days previous to its production the chief topic of conversation. No such enthusiasm is manifested in regard to the first representation of a new play; and, although the house may be crowded and the author called before the curtain, he may deem himself fortunate if his drama is played three or four times during the season, whereas a popular opera will be given night after night for several weeks. An opera, if it has exceptional merit, may be the means of carrying the fame of its composer to the farthest limits of the earth, but it is a question whether a comedy which pleases at Venice will be appreciated even at Rome or Naples, such are the diversities in manners and customs between one Italian province and another.

Supremacy of Opera.

Opera is everywhere fostered and protected. There are a dozen musical conservatori, public and private, in

each of the principal cities, for the training of singers, and prizes are accorded to them out of funds especially set apart for the purpose by the government, which also grants large annual subsidies to the leading lyric theatres, such as the Scala at Milan, the San Carlo at Naples, the Fenice at Venice, the Pergola at Florence, the Carlo Felice at Genoa, the Communale at Bologna and the Apollo at Rome. The dramatic stage has none of these aids; the various companies have to pay their own expenses, and, whatever may be the merits of the artists who compose them, they rarely obtain any special recognition from the government. Although the smallest Italian city possesses its theatre, and some of the capitals—Milan and Naples, for instance—at least a dozen, there is no training school for the stage in any part of the country. In each city the largest and most magnificent theatre is reserved exclusively for operatic performances. When, therefore, the Italian opera houses close for the season, they are never reopened for the accommodation of the wandering stars. The drama is banished to the inferior theatres, and while thousands of francs are spent on the scenery of a new opera or ballet, the player has to content himself with an indifferent stage and wretched decorations.

As Salvini remarked, during his visit to the United States, "Theatrical affairs are just the opposite in Italy to what they are in America. In Italy the opera-bill is never changed more than three times in as many months; in America it varies almost every evening. In Italy the play-bill is renewed nightly, while in this country and in England a drama, if good, may have a

run of over a hundred representations." Nothing surprised Salvini more than the splendor of the mise en scène of some of the New York plays, but he accounted for it easily enough. The managers of most of the New York, Paris and London theatres do not hesitate to lavish large sums of money upon their decorations and scenery, because, should the piece fail for which they were painted, they can be used in some other. The Italian theatres are nearly always the property either of some nobleman or of a company of speculators, whose principal object is to make as much money out of them and spend as little upon them as possible. They are rented out for a few weeks to one or another of the many troupes of actors which are constantly wandering about the country, and which bring their own scenery and dresses with them, generally of the cheapest and most tawdry description.

Open-Air Theatres.

Almost every Italian family of any social position possesses a box at one of the principal theatres, where visits are received and many a scene from the *School for Scandal* is enacted. In winter the opera is the standard amusement of the fashionable world, while the favorite resort in summer is the diurno or open-air theatre, which is in the form of an amphitheatre, the stage, with its accessories, facing an unroofed inclosure, with the seats arranged in tiers one above another and fenced off by an iron balustrade from a terrace which serves the purpose of a gallery. A spacious covered corridor

is nearly always to be found adjacent to the diurno, beneath which the audience can take refuge in case of a shower, walk between the acts and indulge in cooling drinks. The abbonamento, or subscription, to a diurno costs from three to ten dollars for the season of thirty or forty representations. When a dramatic company is about to visit a city the manager first secures his abbonati; for according to their number he is able to regulate his expenses, as he counts little on chance spectators, and nearly always plays before the same audience.

The Actor's Profession.

A Tuscan proverb says: "Figlio d' attore, attore," the son of an actor is always an actor; and this in Italy is especially true. The three greatest actors of modern times, Salvini, Rossi and Majeroni, belong to families which have long been popular on the stage, and so do the actresses Ristori and Sedowsky. Ristori made her début as an infant in the cradle, and was for many years a member of a troupe the leading lady of which was her mother. There are still living in Italy some of the members of a Venetian troupe of comedians whose ancestors were the first interpreters of the comedies of Goldoni, and several of them claim descent from players who enacted the tragedies and comedies of classical literature before the courts of Lucrezia Borgia and Leonora d'Este. In glancing over an Italian play-bill one is invariably struck by the fact that many of the artists bear the same name and are evidently connected by ties of consanguinity or marriage. In the Ristori

troupe, for instance, there were several actors calling themselves by the name of that great artist, and who were doubtless of her family. The Salvini company embraces, besides the two brothers Tommaso and Alessandro, several Piamontis, two or three Piccininis and two Colonellos.

A glance at the history of the stage in Italy will enlighten us as to the true cause both of the harsh condemnation of the church and of the prejudice of society against the dramatic profession. The plays of the old Romans were proverbially loose both in their plots and dialogues, and Juvenal and others have spoken of the actors of their time with the bitterest contempt. During the middle ages the members of the various religious fraternities almost monopolized the stage with their sacred dramas and mysteries, and the "profane stage," as it was called, was so degraded that more than once both the church and state had to use their influence to suppress performances which were too immoral to be described. With the Renaissance the drama was reinstated in the position it occupied during the days of Roman civilization, but the plays of this period were merely imitations of the Latin comedies; and if we may judge by the most celebrated of those which still exist —the *Mandragora* of Macchiavelli—far exceed their models in license. When Benedict XIV ascended the pontifical throne he established a severe censorship, with the effect of banishing immoral productions from the stage without improving its intellectual tone. In the eighteenth century Goldoni appeared and gave to the world his graceful comedies, which were followed

by the lyric dramas of Metastasio and the lofty tragedies of Alfieri. Since then there has been a succession of able dramatists—Monti, Gozzi, Manzoni and others; and as the class of performances acted was elevated, so the character of the performers was improved. From being dissolute they became generally respectable; and at present it may be safely asserted that a better-conducted, more frugal or industrious class of men and women can hardly be found than the Italian players. The class of actresses with whom their profession is only a means of displaying their beauty and splendid but often ill-gotten robes and jewelry is little known in Italy. Such persons would not be tolerated either by their comrades or by the public. Indeed, although within the past few years, owing to the unsettled state of affairs, a great many plays of questionable morality have been acted, especially in Rome, still the tone of the performances usually witnessed in an Italian theatre is greatly above the average of what even Americans applaud.

Theatrical Troupes.

Italian actors have always been in the habit of forming themselves into troupes, or, as they call them, compagnie, placed under the direction of one who is both manager and principal performer. These troupes are divided according to the various kinds of acting; thus, there are companies of tragic, melodramatic and comic actors, but it is very rare to find a combination of tragedy and comedy in the same entertainment. There are probably more than a hundred different troupes of

actors in Italy, including those devoted to the marionette and dialect performances. The Ristori, Salvini and Rossi troupes made the round of the world, while the Bellotti-Bon has never quitted Italy. The last was a remarkable combination of well-trained actors, devoted exclusively to the representation of modern society plays and dramas, mostly translated or adapted from the French. Bellotti-Bon, the director, was not excelled in his own line, even on the stage of the Théâtre Français. His company was rich, and its scenery and dresses tasteful. The late Signora Cazzola, once the leading lady of the troupe, was perhaps the best high-comedy and dramatic actress Italy has produced. Alexandre Dumas the younger preferred this lady's interpretation of the rôle of Marguerite Gauthier in *La Dame aux Camélias* to that of Madame Doche, who created the part. She produced a great effect when the dying Camille looks at herself in the glass for the first time after her long illness. Instead of screaming or fainting, as is usual with most actresses who undertake the character, Cazzola stood for a long time gazing intently at the havoc disease had wrought upon her lovely countenance. Then, with a deep sigh and an expression of intense agony, she turned the mirror with its back toward her, implying that she could never again endure the pain of seeing herself reflected upon its truth-telling surface. On the toilette-table was a vase full of camellias—those beautiful but scentless flowers which were emblematic of her brilliant but artificial life. Taking one of these in her hand, she plucked it to pieces leaf by leaf, and when the last petal fell to the ground, went

quietly back to her bed, there hopelessly to await the coming of death. Her parting with Armand was very pathetic, and her death, although harrowing and true to nature, was not revolting, its horrors being moderated by artistic good sense and delicacy. This great artiste died young, worn out by the strong emotions she not only represented, but actually felt.

Prominent Players.

Cazzola, together with Virginia Marini and Isolina Piamonti, was a pupil of Salvini. Virginia Marini is well considered in Italy, and used to be the leading lady in the Salvini troupe. She later directed a company of her own and was succeeded in her former position by the estimable Signora Piamonti, whom Salvini declared to be one of the most versatile artistes he had ever known, equally good in the highest tragedy or the liveliest farce. Her Dalila in *Samson* was much admired in America, but her rendering of the rôle of Francesca da Rimini was perhaps her greatest performance.

Signora Sedowsky was probably the greatest of Italian tragic actresses. While perhaps less stately and majestic than Ristori, in fire and depth of feeling she greatly surpassed that eminent tragédienne, her Phèdre being pronounced by excellent judges equal to that of Rachel. Sedowsky was born at Naples and was the proprietress of three large theatres in that city. She was the wife of a wealthy nobleman, but notwithstanding her rank and wealth she remained on the stage, and

at the same time was received with honor in the first society. She never acted outside of Italy, and very rarely beyond the walls of Naples.

Adelaide Ristori.

The superlative merits of Ristori are so well known in America that the mere mention of her name recalls some of the finest personations ever witnessed on the stage. Her genius and beauty, her majesty and glorious method of declamation won her a foremost rank in her profession, and her virtues and nobility of conduct the esteem of all who knew her. There are, indeed, few women more estimable, either in private or professional life, than was Adelaide Ristori, Marchioness Capranica del Grillo. It may be a matter of surprise, but such is the fact, that in Italy Ristori was more famous in comedy than in tragedy, excelling in such parts as the hostess in Goldoni's clever comedy of *La Locandiera*. Yet it is hard to believe that she produced anything superior to her magnificent tragic conceptions as *Medea* and *Lady Macbeth*. Of the latter she played only the sleep-walking scene during her American tours, and that in English, with just enough of her pleasing Italian accent to give further interest to her marvelous personation. The effect was electric; for though her audiences were often scanty, and even cold, it was a revelation such as only the highest order of genius can produce. Her version differed essentially from those of Mrs. Siddons, Charlotte Cushman and other great personators of the part. Especially fine

were the facial expression and the rubbing of the right hand over the left in the lines beginning "Out, out, damned spot," ending with a long-drawn sigh, as of a lost spirit, which chilled the hearts of the most hardened veterans, for whom both the real and the mimic world had long since lost their attractions.

Eleanora Duse.

Less favorable was the reception of Eleanora Duse, who made professional tours of the United States in 1895 and 1902. On the latter occasion she made a fatal mistake, for her arrival was heralded by the announcement that she purposed to introduce D'Annunzio's productions and to cultivate a taste for his work, to the enlightenment and edification of the American people. First of all, American audiences go to the theatre to be amused, and not to be enlightened and edified, especially through the medium of D'Annunzio's plays. Said a Philadelphia paper, commenting on her performance of *Giaconda:* "If such a purpose is seriously contemplated, it may as well be said now that it is predestined to failure. *Giaconda* and lugubrious dramas of this morbid and distressing character cannot be made acceptable in America, as they are entirely foreign to the monitions of our temperament."

Yet the critic and the audience rendered full justice to the great actress, for great she unquestionably is, and if she would renounce her avowed intention of acting only in D'Annunzio's plays, and appear, say, in Shakespearean parts, people would not merely acknowl-

edge her genius, but would go to see her. As it is, there was on the night in question but half a house—due partly to inclement weather—and that was far from enthusiastic, while the opera, of which it was the opening performance, was crowded with the wealth and fashion of the city. Continuing, the critic remarks: "Mme. Duse was but one among a group of players, each of whom demonstrated the possession of dramatic qualities most effectively developed. In but two scenes does her presence dominate the situation. In the first act she has very little to do or say, the evolution of the interests in the play depending on Lorenzo Gaddi, the sculptor's master, and the venerable friend of the family, a noble character rendered with distinction by Ettore Mazzanti. The second act gives an environment to the masterly monologue which constitutes the main feature of the entire drama. In the closing scene of this act Silvia Settala has a declamatory passage in which Duse strikes fire for the first time. Her spirited enunciation of her purpose to visit her husband's studio and face her rival there is a magnificent display of reserved force, in which this artist reaches the height of her art.

"In the studio scene between the downtrodden wife and the superb Giaconda, who has the advantage of feeling triumphantly at home in that place where Silvia has been a stranger, the siren enchantress is given by the author decidedly the best of the argument. Giaconda, magnificently personated by Emilia Varini, is supposed to triumph over the desolated victim of the drama, and Silvia is cast down into a depth of calamity

by which she is so terribly mutilated in attempting to save from destruction her husband's chief work of sculpture that it would have been better for her had the falling statue killed her on the spot. Degradation, humiliation and the crushing weight of hopeless misery can be piled upon sorrow's head until the sacrifice becomes too poignant to retain human interest, and a reaction occurs, in which only a sense of the helplessness of humanity remains to be experienced.

"The performance was carried out at a racing speed and the play was evidently pruned down for quick representation, many of the intended effects being left to the imagination of the auditors rather than rendered by the actors. To compress a four-act tragedy into a performance of a brief two hours necessitates rushing haste, though the American part of the audience had evidently enough of the play, even in its abbreviated form."

Other Italian Actors.

Of Italian actors, Gustavo Modena was one of the most renowned. He was to the stage of his native land what Garrick was to that of England, and his conception of the various parts in classic drama, his "points," and even his dress, have become traditional and are almost invariably retained by his followers. One of his most famous rôles was Saul, in Alfieri's tragedy of that name. In person he was tall and largely built; his countenance was not prepossessing, and, like Michael Angelo, he had a broken nose. His eye could assume a terrific aspect, and his voice was rich, power-

ful and varied in tone. At times it rolled like thunder, while at other moments it was soft and tender as the sweetest notes of a flute.

Rossi was in some respects preferred to Modena, and even to his pupil, the great Salvini. He was, perhaps, more impetuous and ardent than either; but he was less intellectual, and his elocution was decidedly inferior.

Majeroni was an actor of the same school, but in his later years had a tendency to rant.

Salvini.

Tommaso Salvini was born in the Lombard capital on January 1, 1830, of Milanese parentage, his father being an actor of note and his mother a popular actress, whose maiden name was Guglielmina Zocchi. When quite a boy Tommaso showed a rare talent for acting, and performed in certain plays given during the Easter holidays in the school where he was educated with such rare ability that his father determined to train him for the stage, placing him under the tuition of Modena, who treated him almost as a son. The culture received thus early from such able hands soon bore fruit, and before he was thirteen the lad won repute in juvenile characters. At fifteen he lost both his parents, and the bereavement so preyed upon his spirits that he was obliged to suspend his career for two years, placing himself again under the tuition of Modena. When he again emerged from retirement he joined the Ristori troupe and shared with that great actress many a triumph. In 1849 Salvini entered the army of Italian

independence and fought valiantly for the defence of his country, receiving, in recognition of his services, several medals of honor. Peace being proclaimed, he appeared upon the stage in a company directed by Cesare Dondini, playing in the *Edipo* of Niccolini—a tragedy written expressly for him—and achieving a great success.

Salvini's next performance was in Alfieri's *Saul,* and then all Italy declared that Modena's mantle had fallen on worthy shoulders. His fame was now prodigious, and wherever he went he was received with boundless enthusiasm. He visited Paris, where he played Orasmane, Orestes, Saul and Othello. On his return to Florence he was hospitably entertained by the marquis of Normanby, then English ambassador to the court of Tuscany, who strongly encouraged him to extend his repertory of Shakespearean characters. In 1865 occurred the sixth centenary of Dante's birthday, and the four greatest Italian actors were invited to perform in Silvio Pellico's tragedy of *Francesca da Rimini,* which is founded on an episode in the *Divina Commedia.* The cast originally stood on the play-bills thus: Francesca, Signora Ristori; Lancelotto, Rossi; Paulo, Salvini, and Guido, Majeroni. It happened, however, that Rossi, who was unaccustomed to play the part of Lancelotto, felt timid at appearing in a character so little suited to him. Hearing this, Salvini, with his usual politeness and good-nature, volunteered to take this minor part, relinquishing the grand rôle of Paulo to his junior in the profession. He created by the force of his genius such a vivid impression that the city of Florence re-

warded him with a statuette of Dante, and King Victor Emmanuel with the title of knight of the order of Saints Maurice and Lazarus. Later he received from the same monarch a diamond ring, with the rank of officer in the order of the Crown of Italy. During a visit to Madrid, his acting of the death of Conrad in *La Morte Civile* produced such an impression that the easily-excited spectators rushed upon the stage to ascertain whether the death was actual or mimic. Queen Isabella II conferred upon him many marks of favor, as afterward did King Louis of Portugal, who frequently entertained him at the royal palace in Lisbon.

Very remarkable is the difference between the Salvini of the stage and the Salvini of private life, the one so fiery and impetuous, the other so gentle and urbane. He possessed all the manners of the good old school, courtly and a little ceremonious, reminding one of those Italian nobles of the sixteenth century. His greeting was cordial and his conversation delightful, full of anecdote and marked with enthusiasm for his art. "When I first became acquainted with him," said one of his admirers, "I was of the opinion that his interpretation of Hamlet was based only upon the translated text, but in the course of a very long conversation on the subject I discovered that he was well acquainted, through literal translations, not only with the text, but also with the notes and comments of our leading critics." In common with nearly all the great actors of his age, he was a thorough and life-long student, devoting more study to a single part than others bestowed on their entire repertoire. Such is indeed the chief char-

acteristic of the great masters of the stage, by whom hard, faithful work is recognized as the essence of genius.

Salvini's American Tour.

Salvini's visit to the United States formed a memorable episode in theatrical circles. His acting was even more of a revelation than Ristori's, especially his Shakespearean characters, and above all, his Hamlet and Othello, which he presented as they had never before been witnessed on the English-speaking stage. In Hamlet he made many changes, and Othello he cut into six acts, in order to dispense with part of the scene-shifting, the noise of which disturbed his equanimity. "It is a matter of wonder to me," he said, "that English and American actors can play a great character like this for so many nights in succession, and above all that they can retain their self-possession while the fidgety noise of scene-shifting is going on behind them." It cost Salvini several years of study to make himself master of the part, and he played it with such enthusiasm and intensity that, after repeating it three nights in succession, he was utterly exhausted. His interpretation was absolutely unrivalled, and differed in many respects from the conventional type. "In my opinion," he said, "Shakespeare intended Othello to be a Moor of Barbary or some other part of northern Africa, of whom there were many in Italy during the sixteenth century. I have met several, and I think I know how to imitate their ways and manners. The historical Othello was not a black man at all. He was a white man, and a

Venetian general named Mora, whose history resembles that of Shakespeare's hero in many particulars. Giraldo Cinthio, probably for the sake of effect, made out of the name Mora, moro, a blackamoor; and Shakespeare, unacquainted with the true story, followed the old novelist's lead. It is well that he did so; for we have in consequence the most perfect delineation of the peculiarities of Moorish temperament ever conceived." The costumes worn by Salvini in *Othello* were copied from Venetian paintings of the fifteenth century, in which several Moorish officers appear.

Salvini was a most conscientious actor, always doing his best, without regard to the size or quality of his audiences. On one occasion, after a poorly attended performance of *Saul*, he was found by a friend in his dressing-room in a state of complete exhaustion. "How can you exert yourself thus," he was asked, "to please so few people?" "They have paid their money," was the reply, "and are entitled to the best I can do for them; besides that, when I am on the stage I forget the world and all that is in it, and live the character I represent." "You will make a grand Lear," said another. "Yes," he answered, "I think I can make something out of the old king. I have been reading the tragedy for some time, but it will take me two years to study it thoroughly."

Salvini's visit to America was fruitful of a double good. He showed us the splendor of Italian genius, even revealing new marvels in that mine of wealth, the works of the greatest bard of the English-speaking race; and he went back to Italy to tell her people of things

he had seen in the New World which his great compatriot had discovered—as wonderful in their way as any related by Othello to Desdemona's willing ear. His reception here was of the kind always accorded in the United States to actors and actresses of genius, and not even Henry Irving was received with more hearty welcome. He met with neither rivalry nor jealousy; for there were none of his school, and all our great actors, including Edwin Booth, then in the zenith of his fame, extended to him the right hand of fellowship as cordially as did the audiences which represented the culture and wealth of every great city in the Union.

THE FAITHFUL FRIEND

(IL FIDO AMICO)

OF

FLAMMINIA SCALA.

From the Commedia dell' Arte.

(*Translated, after Klein, by W. H. H. Chambers.*)

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

PANTALOON, a Venetian.
ISABELLA, his Daughter.
PEDROLINO, a Servant.
HARLEQUIN, a Servant.
GRATIANO, a Doctor of Laws.
FLAMMINIA, his Daughter.
FLAVIO, his Son.
ORATIO, a Young Nobleman.
CAPTAIN SPAVENTO.
A MUSICIAN.
CAPTAIN OF THE WATCH.
CORPORAL OF THE WATCH.
FRANCESCHINA.

The Faithful Friend.

ARGUMENT.

There live in Naples two noble youths, one named Oratio, the other Flavio. Both love a charming maiden, Isabella, the daughter of a celebrated Pantaloon belonging to the "Needy Ones of Venice," a well-known comedy troupe. Isabella returning Oratio's love, he decides to abduct her, with the help of his friend Flavio, whose secret love for her is unsuspected. After the abduction, Oratio takes Isabella to Flavio's house, leaving her with his sister, Flamminia. Burning with secret passion for Oratio, the latter leaves with him. Flavio, however, who now has Isabella in his power, guards her honor sacredly, in order to return her to his friend as pure as he left her. Finally, Oratio marries Flamminia, renouncing his first love for the sake of Flavio, to the satisfaction of both maidens and with the blessing of their parents. There is no dialogue in the piece; for, as already mentioned, this was extemporised by the actors, the scenes being written merely in skeleton form, hung up behind the stage, and consulted by each of the actors before making his appearance.

ACT I.

SCENE—THE CITY OF NAPLES. NIGHT.

Pantaloon comes on the stage with a lighted lantern and says he has told the regent and the captain of the watch of the flight of his daughter. He adds that he strongly suspects the Pedant (Doctor Gratiano) because he is nowhere to be seen.

Harlequin conjectures that Isabella has eloped with Oratio. They hear people coming, so both go in the house, Harlequin appearing immediately after at a window. Meanwhile, on comes

Oratio, in order to learn, if possible, what Pantaloon knows of the disappearance of his daughter. He tells the servant, Pedrolino, that he abducted Isabella and took her to the house of Flavio, his most intimate friend.

Pedrolino advises Oratio that it is not wise to trust Flavio to this extent, taking into consideration the fire of youth. He talks, also, of the love Flavio's sister, Flamminia, feels for Oratio.

Ora. cuts this conversation short, tells Pedrolino to leave and makes a signal for Isabella to come out.

Isabella comes shyly out of the house and tells him that his friend, Flavio, for some reason has not returned. Meanwhile

Flamminia appears at a window.

Isa. asks Oratio if he has ever loved another and begs him to take her away from this house as soon as he can.

Ora. replies boldly that he never loved anyone else, and promises to take her away shortly. Then he sends her back, with the remark that this house contains what is dearest and loveliest to him on earth. He sees Pantaloon coming and runs off.

Pant. learns of Harlequin, who had slipped out and listened to what Oratio said. He sees the doctor coming on with a lighted lantern.

Gratiano intends to go into the house for his supper.

Pant. invites himself.

Grat. says he has nothing for him, stops, acts as if he had lost one of his legal papers and goes off seeking it.

Pant. is strengthened in his suspicion of the doctor.

Harl. volunteers to get into the house by means of a ladder, as he has done often, to meet the servant-girl, Olivetta, whom he loves. They go off to get the ladder.

Flam. at the window wonders why her brother and father have not yet returned home. She speaks of her burning love for Oratio.

Isa., under the window, has been listening to Flamminia's soliloquy and calls her down. They talk on the street.

Flam. tells Isabella that Oratio has deceived her, that he has brought her there really for Flavio and that Oratio loves her, Flamminia.

Isa. cries bitterly over Oratio's treachery, begs Flamminia to receive her and to watch over her honor. Goes crying into the house.

Flam. apostrophizes Cupid, praying the god to cause Oratio and Isabella to become estranged and to turn his heart to her; then goes into the house.

Captain Spavento comes on with musicians to serenade Isabella, who has been promised him in marriage by her father. Meanwhile

Grat. returns for his supper.

Cap. Spa. invites himself to this meal, but

Grat. insists that the captain should fast, and goes into the house.

Cap. Spa. and his musicians play awhile. Then out steps

Harl. and asks the captain for whom the serenade is intended.

Cap. for Isabella, my promised bride.

Harl. imparts to him Isabella's flight.

Cap. storms around and swears, so that

Harl. flees into the house. The noise brings

Ped. on; he acts as if he had a bow under his mantle and intended to shoot the captain.

Cap. and his musicians run off in great disorder.

Ped. laughs scornfully, but hides himself, as

Pant. comes on with a lighted lantern to discover what all the noise is about. Now appears

Harl. with a ladder. As soon as he reaches Pantaloon he blows out the light in the lantern, places the ladder against Gratiano's house and ascends. During this

Ped. sneaks in, changes his voice and beats Pantaloon.

Harl. from fright falls from the ladder, picks himself up and runs away.

Ped. goes off laughing.

ACT II.

SAME SCENE—NIGHT.

Flavio comes on explaining to Pedrolino that he dare not go home because he loves Isabella so dearly, and fears that he cannot restrain himself. He wishes to be careful not to do anything to injure his friend.

Pedrolino tries to show him the folly of his love for her.

Flav. goes off sighing.

Oratio comes on.

Ped. tells him that he believes it necessary, without mentioning his reasons, that Isabella should be taken away from the house. For the sake of safety he advises Oratio to dress in the Spanish style, as Spaniards are so universally feared.

Ora. leaves, promising to follow his advice.

Captain Spavento comes on, and there follows a comic scene in the dark between Harlequin and Pantaloon, both "drunken with sleep."

Flav. scares the captain away with a bare weapon. The noise brings

Isabella out of the house. She recognizes Flavio and inquires why he did not come home for supper.

Flav. excuses herself on the ground of his love for a lady.

Isa. asks the lady's name.

Flav. replies that he dare not name her.

Ped. calls aloud: "Isabella." While he is calling, on comes

Cap. Spa., wrapped in a Spanish mantle. In the dark

Ped. takes the captain for Oratio disguised as a Spaniard and advises Isabella to go with him.

Cap. Spa. puts his arms around her and leads her away.

Flamminia hears and sees all from her window, and, believing it to be Flavio that led Isabella away, mourns over her destroyed hopes.

Flav., who is listening, pities his sister and himself.

Ped., in great excitement, comes on and tells them of the abduction of Isabella by the captain.

Flav. hurries away to rescue her.

Flam., pleased with the substitution, goes quickly to Isabella's room, where she puts on Isabella's hat and mantle, which she had left behind.

Ora., in Spanish disguise, comes on and is leading Flamminia—whom he believes to be Isabella—away, when the captain of the watch arrives and arrests him.

Captain of the Watch, also believing Flamminia to be Isabella, says that he will take her to his wife and daughters, where she must remain awhile; then leads her away, after telling Oratio that he must appear the next morning before the regent to answer for his misdeeds.

Flav. returns and tells the greatly-dejected Oratio that he has succeeded in rescuing Isabella from the captain and has taken her to the lodging-house of Franceschina.

Ora. becomes very joyful.

Pantaloon comes out, and then

Doctor Gratiano. They engage in a violent quarrel, as Pantaloon still believes that his daughter was abducted with the full knowledge and consent of the doctor.

ACT III.

SAME SCENE—DAYBREAK.

Franceschina tells Oratio of the self-sacrifice of Flavio; how he is really consumed with love for Isabella, but fights it down out of friendship. She tells that Isabella has returned.

Pantaloon goes to the captain of the watch, and is shown the imprisoned lady, whom he finds to be Flamminia.

Flavio, learning this, expresses astonishment at Oratio's treachery, and swears that he will kill Flamminia.

Isabella on her way home meets Flavio, who relates the foregoing circumstances to her. She laments over Oratio's betrayal of friendship and love.

The watch come along; they wish to arrest Flavio, who defends himself with his sword, fighting them off valiantly. As they escape

Flav. falls to the ground, wounded in the head, and is helped to Pantaloon's house.

Isa. binds up his wounds, crying the while.

Captain Spavento comes on with his head tied up, pretending to be sorely wounded.

Pant. insists on seeing the injuries, and, finding none,

Harl. drives the captain away, beating him with a club.

Flamminia, accompanied by her father, comes on and explains everything in full.

Pant. finds the wounded Flavio and Isabella at his house and forgives her.

Oratio now returns.

Pant., softened by the return of his daughter and her established innocence, consents to her marriage with Oratio, amid the tears and expressed sympathy of those present.

Ora., however, deeply moved by Flavio's true friendship, asks Flamminia's hand for himself and begs Flavio to marry the girl he loves—Isabella. All consent, amid general rejoicing and blessings.

THE DREAM OF SCIPIO.

BY PIETRO METASTASIO.

(*Translated by John Hoole.*)

PERSONAGES.

SCIPIO.
CONSTANCY.
FORTUNE.
PUBLIUS.
EMILIUS, Father of Scipio.
CHORUS OF HEROES.

THE ACTION IS IN THE PALACE OF MASINISSA IN AFRICA.

The Dream of Scipio.

PRELUDE.

Scipio Africanus, lying asleep, is visited by Constancy and Fortune, who urge him to arouse himself to action. He imagines himself to be in the palace of Masinissa,

> Where but even now I closed my eyes in sleep.

But Constancy says to him:

> No, Africa is far,
> Far distant from us. Scipio, thou art placed
> In Heaven's unmeasured temple.

Here he would remain with his ancestor, Publius and his father, Emilius, but as Fortune and Constancy tell him, "It is not yet allowed, it cannot be;" and says Publius, "Thou yet must live and long." When Scipio answers that he has "lived enough, enough for Scipio," Emilius replies:

> Yes; but not enough
> For Fate's designs, or for the weal of Rome,
> For earth and Heaven.

Publius responds in similar strain, and is seconded by Constancy, but Fortune, whom Scipio scorns, threatens dire disasters. While defying her, he awakes amid a violent storm, and finds himself in the palace of Masinissa, where "Constancy still dwells with Scipio," and in his breast he "feels her sacred influence."

Scipio (asleep), Constancy, Fortune.

Fortune.—Come, mighty offspring of Emilius, come,
Pursue my steps.

Constancy.—O! Scipio! come and follow
My better track.

Scipio.—Who dares disturb my rest?

Fort.—'Tis I.

Cons.—'Tis I: appease thy ill-tim'd anger.

Fort.—Turn, turn to me.

Cons.—Behold my features.

Scip.—Gods!
What blaze of light! What harmony unknown!
What forms are these so splendid and so fair!
Where am I?—Who are you?

Cons.—The nurse of heroes.

Fort.—The great dispenser I of every good
The universe can yield.

Cons.—I am Constancy.

Fort.—And Fortune I.

Scip.—But wherefore seek ye me?

Cons.—That thou, O! Scipio, may'st between us choose
Thy partner through the rugged paths of life.

Fort.—We promise both to make thee blest.

Cons.—Decide:
To her or me intrust thy future guidance.

Scip.—I know not what to answer.

Fort.—Dost thou doubt?

Cons.—Canst thou one moment pause?

Fort.—My lock invites thee;
And wilt thou not to me consign thy days?

Cons.—Hear'st thou my name and com'st not?

Fort.—Speak.

Cons.—Resolve.

Scip.—What shall I answer? If I must resolve,
One moment give to commune with myself.
Where am I? Say, what power has hither brought me?
If all I see be truth, or but a dream,
If yet I wake, or fancy but deceive me?

While round this wondrous scene I gaze,
My soul, bewilder'd with amaze,
On nothing yet resolves.
The heart in mingled passions lost,
As by a troubled ocean tost,
A thousand thoughts revolves.

Cons.—Well hast thou said. Converse with each apart,
And learn whate'er thou seekest.

Fort.—Scipio, yes:
But brief be thy demands: I cannot bear
A long delay; for, varying still, I shift
With every moment my pursuit and place.

Unstable as the wind am I,
With looks that change and feet that fly:
With anger now I burn, and now
The smiles of pleasure smooth my brow.
Sometimes I take delight awhile,
To raise from earth the ruin'd pile;
And soon an equal zeal employ
My recent labor to destroy.

Scip.—Where am I, then? In Masinissa's palace,
Where but even now I clos'd my eyes in sleep?
It cannot be.

Cons.—No, Africa is far,
Far distant from us. Scipio, thou art plac'd
In Heaven's unmeasur'd temple.
Fort.—Dost thou not
Confess it by the numerous stars that blaze
With glories round thee? By the unwonted sound
Of whirling spheres in rapturous minstrelsy?
By this celestial orb of living sapphire
In which they roll?
Scip.—O! say, amidst the spheres
What makes this symphony?
Cons.—The same that makes
With them proportion'd inequality
Of measure and of motion: in their course
They circling meet, and each returns a sound
Distinct from each, while all together form
One perfect concord. On the mortal lyre
The strings, attemper'd thus by hand and ear,
Emit sweet harmony. This magic force,
This secret rule that makes unlike agree,
Is call'd proportion, universal law
Of all created things; mysterious ray
Of highest wisdom, which the Samian sage
In sacred numbers taught.
Scip.—But wherefore fails
Such powerful melody to strike the sense
Of human organs? Why unheard by those
In our terrestrial dwelling?
Cons.—Strains like these
Confound the faculties of earthly sense.

Those eyes that seek the noon-day sun,
Soon lose their dazzled sight:
The nerves oppress'd and weaken'd, shun
Th' excessive blaze of light.

The simple hind, who near resides
Where falling Nilus roars,
Hears not the rush of foaming tides
That shake the deafen'd shores.

Scip.—Say, what inhabitants——

Fort.—No further question,
But make at length thy choice.

Scip.—Indulgent yet
Say, who reside in these supernal seats?

Cons.—Numbers are here, of various virtues, fram'd
To various parts.

Scip.—But who their dwelling find
Where now we meet?

Fort.—Behold who come to instruct thee.

Scipio, Constancy, Fortune, Publius, Chorus of Heroes and Emilius.

Chorus.—From heroes sprung, by fate bestow'd
To give to Rome her earliest fame,
O! welcome to this bright abode:
No strangers we to Scipio's name.

A thousand glorious footsteps view:
Lo! here thy great forefathers trace,
And through each shining path pursue
The deeds of thy illustrious race.

Scipio.—Ye powers! am I deceiv'd, or do these eyes
Behold my great progenitor, who bow'd
Rebellious Afric to the yoke of Rome?

Publius.—Doubt not; 'tis I.

Scip.—My soul is chill'd with awe!
Are then the dead——

Pub.—Scipio, thou err'st, for know
That Publius is not dead.

Scip.—Yet sure consum'd
To nameless ashes, midst the funeral pile,
Long since has Rome bewail'd thee.

Pub.—Cease, O! cease;
Thou little know'st thyself. Believ'st thou, then,
That hand, those features and those limbs, that form
The outward man are Scipio? Thou'rt deceiv'd—

They are but vestments—learn, the immortal sense,
By which alone we think, conceive and live;
That has no parts, and cannot be dissolv'd.
That lessens not its power by length of years,
That, that is Scipio, and can never die.
Hard were, indeed, the destiny of virtue,
If nothing of us liv'd beyond the tomb;
And if, indeed, we knew no other good
Than what on earth the wicked chiefly share.
No, Scipio, no—the perfect cause of all
Is ever just. Beyond the funeral pile
We still have other hopes. These glorious seats
Of light eternal are our great reward;
And fairest of them this, where dwells with me
Whoe'er on earth has lov'd his native land;
Whoe'er for public good has clos'd his days,
And for another's sake his blood effus'd.

If here thy hopes some future day
Would find a happy seat,
Thy great forefathers' deeds survey,
Nor Publius' name forget.

By him, who meets like us his death,
Here endless life is known:
He merits not his natal breath,
Who lives but for himself alone.

Scip.—As heroes they reside——

Fortune.—If still thy doubts
Are unresolved, my patience, Scipio, fails—
Decide—decide.

Constancy.—Let him demand at full:
Since what he learns will teach him best to fix
Between our claims.

Scip.—As heroes then reside
In these blest regions, wherefore sees not Scipio
His warlike father?

Pub.—Dost thou not behold him
There full reveal'd to sight?

Scip.—'Tis true, 'tis true,
Forgive me, mighty father! I have err'd,
But 'twas the error of my dazzled eyes,
I saw thee not: I err'd not in my mind;
There ever dwells thy image—thou art he,
Already in thy well-known form I trace
Paternal majesty. I gaze upon thee,
And my heart beats with love and filial duty.
Indulgent gods! O! father most belov'd,
O! happy day!—but dost thou calmly thus
Receive thy son? Serene, thy features show
No fond emotion. Feel'st thou not, my father,
To see me here, a joy that equals mine?

Emilius.—The joy, my son, which heavenly bosoms feel,
Oppresses not like yours, and yet is more.

Scip.—I am rapt beyond myself—all, all is wonder!
My every sense is lost!

Emil.—Thou canst not quit
The false ideas of the world below,
Though now so far remote. Cast down thine eye,
Look there, behold enclos'd with murky clouds,
Yon little globe, yon scarce-distinguish'd spot.

Scip.—Ye powers!—can that be earth?

Emil.—Thy earth is there.

Scip.—All its huge forests, all its rapid floods;
Its mighty provinces, contending realms,
With every countless nation—Tiber—Rome?

Emil.—All in that spot compris'd.

Scip.—O! sire belov'd!
How vain, how nothing to my sight appears
The wretched theatre of human pride!

Emil.—Ah! could'st thou on that theatre, my son,
Observe the actors; see their follies, dreams,
Their false pursuits; and every cause that here
Claims just derision, there exciting rage,
And grief and joy and love—how wretched, then,
To thee would seem the boasts of human-kind.

You hapless mortals, smile below
To mark the puling infant's woe;
And mock the little tears that flow
For every trivial ill.
No less above we smile to view
Man's ripen'd age such toys pursue,
And even with locks of silver hue,
Be helpless children still.

Scip.—O! Publius! O! my father! let me here
With you reside. I gladly will forsake
That seat of human wretchedness below.
Fort.—It is not yet allow'd.
Cons.—It cannot be.
Pub.—Thou yet must live and long.
Scip.—I've liv'd enough,
Enough for Scipio.
Emil.—Yes; but not enough
For Fate's designs, or for the weal of Rome,
For earth and Heaven.
Pub.—Much hast thou done already,
But more remains to do. 'Tis not in vain
That Scipio boasts the honors of his race,
His lineal wreaths; and not by chance the plains
Of fair Iberia own'd thy youthful toils.
Think not thou bear'st in vain the glorious name
Fatal to Africa. The task was mine
To lay the yoke on such a potent foe,
But thine is to destroy him.—Go—meantime
Prepare no less for sufferings than for triumph:
Both furnish palms for Virtue. Destiny
May shake, but not subdue her: when she strives
With adverse days she shines with nobler fame.

High-seated on the mountain's brow
An aged oak, when tempests blow,
Secure the blustering rage sustains:
His leaves in winter scatter'd round,
With firmer root he strikes the ground,
And losing beauty strength he gains.

Scip.—Since all were vain to oppose the will of Fate,
I yield to her decree.
Cons.—Now, Scipio, time
Demands thy choice.
Fort.—Thou need'st no further learn,
But well canst judge between us.
Scip.—'Tis requir'd,
O! Publius, that of these contending powers——
Pub.—I know it all—act as thou wilt.
Scip.—My father,
O! give me counsel.
Emil.—No; my counsel, son,
From thee would take the glory of thy choice.
Fort.—If thou would'st wish for happiness, beware
Thou dalliest not with Fortune—Scipio, seize
The moment when my lock invites thy hand.
Scip.—But tell me, thou that urgest thus thy claim,
Why should I follow thee, and why prefer
Thy steps before thy rival's?
Fort.—What attempt,
Without my aid, can e'er with man succeed?
Know'st thou my power? I am arbitress below
Of every good or ill: behold the hand
That scatters, at my pleasure, grief or joy,
Disgrace or honors, poverty or wealth.
Lo! I am she that builds, destroys, renews
The mightiest empires. I, at will, can change
A cottage to a throne; and, at my nod,
A throne becomes a cottage. In the sky
Whirlwinds are mine, and tempests on the sea.
I rule the fate of armies: at my smile
Defeat becomes a gain, and palms arise
From battles lost; and when displeas'd, I rend
The promis'd laurel from the victor's hand,
Even on the edge of conquest. Would'st thou more?
Virtue and valor both confess my sway.
When Fortune wills the vilest seems most bold,
And bold the vilest. In despite of justice,
Guilt stands absolv'd, and innocence is guilty.

To him I view with favoring sight,
Like day appears the gloomy night:
For him, when winter binds the plain,
Earth gives to spring the golden grain.

But when on one, in evil hour,
The angry eyes of Fortune lour;
To him the wood its shade denies;
No waves for him the sea supplies.

Scip.—And is there nothing, then, on earth to oppose
To such tremendous power?

Cons.—Yes—Constancy.
Know, Scipio, I, and I alone, prescribe
The law and limits to her dreaded reign.
Where'er I am she never can extend
Her mutable dominion. In my presence
Her best of gifts will never boast a charm,
Nor shall her threats have terror. Virtue, valor,
Perchance from her may suffer wrong; but Time,
My great avenger, will at length assign
To every deed its merit.—Not in her,
In me, O! Scipio, the preserver view
Of states and empires: this thy ancestors,
And this thy Rome experienc'd. Press'd, indeed,
By Brennus, in Tarpeia's rocky straits,
The Latian freedom shook, but could not fall.
'Tis true, that on the banks of Aufidus
The Roman consul saw his warrior-youth
All perish by the sword; but scorn'd himself
To sink in blank despair. To gain the palms,
The latest palms from Rome, with all his host
Of countless standards, Annibal o'ershades
The Roman soil, but finds that soil a grave
To all the victor's hopes. Such deeds are mine,
And such as Fortune never can resist.
She, wearied soon, a different aspect wears;
And in her own despite becomes my slave.

The rock, with foamy billows white,
Seems sinking down the tumbling tide,

While soaring o'er its topmost height,
The waters gain on every side.

But proudly batter'd round in vain
Its stately head the tempest braves,
Till smooth'd to calms, the placid main
Creeps round its foot with lambent waves.

Scip.—No more—celestial Constancy, 'tis thine:
Lead where thou wilt, I ask no other guide;
I follow thee.

Fort.—Are, then, my gifts despis'd?

Scip.—I seek not, nor refuse them.

Fort.—And my rage?

Scip.—I not defy, nor fear it.

Fort.—Scipio, think;
Thou may'st in vain repent—look well upon me—
Reflect, and then resolve.

Scip.—I am resolv'd.

Go, boast an undisputed sway,
That all mankind thy rule obey;
Yet think not hence in chains to bind
A noble heart, a virtuous mind,
That neither fear nor baseness knows.
Let abject souls thy influence own,
And bend before thy tyrant-throne;
Such souls as godlike gifts despise,
And only sordid merit prize,
Such merit as thy smile bestows.

Fort.—Is there a mortal, then, that dares deny
To me his vows, and slight my proffer'd grace?

Scip.—Yes—I am he.

Fort.—'Tis well—prepare to prove
My hostile fury—come, disasters dire,
Adventures horrible! Ye ministers
Of my resentment—crush this daring rebel,
To you consign'd, and doom'd to every woe.

Scip.—Ye powers! what can this mean! what sanguine gleam!
What clouds and storms! What darkness gathers round!
And hark! resounding through the affrighted spheres
What horrid crash! A hundred forky bolts
Hiss o'er my head, while yon ethereal vault
Seems tumbling into chaos!—But the soul
Of Scipio knows not fear—in vain your threats,
Insulting Fortune! Goddess still unjust,
Perfidious power!
But hold, what voice awakes
My slumbering sense? Where am I? This is sure
The abode of Masinissa—where is Publius?
My father, where? The heavens and starry spheres
All vanish'd, and these wonders but a dream!
Yet this at least is real—Constancy
Still dwells with Scipio—in my breast I feel
Her sacred influence—friendly gods! I own
Your favoring grace—auspicious omen, hail!

THE POST-INN

(L' OSTERIA DELLA POSTA)

OF

CARLO GOLDONI.

(*Translated by W. H. H. Chambers.*)

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

COUNT ROBERT di RIPALUNGA.
COUNTESS BEATRICE, his Daughter.
MARQUIS LEONARD de' FIORELLINI.
LIEUTENANT MALPRESTI, friend of the Marquis.
BARON TALISMANI.
A SERVANT OF THE INN.
COUNT ROBERT'S VALET.

The Post-Inn.

ARGUMENT.

After a custom that obtains in Italy, a father, without consulting his daughter's taste, has promised her in marriage to the Marquis Leonard de' Fiorellini. In fact, they have never seen the man to whom she is engaged, nor has he—the Marquis—seen either of them. While on his way to be married, Fiorellini stops at the Post-Inn, where he learns, to his utter surprise, that a lady to whom he is talking is his betrothed —travelling in an opposite direction. To discover the motive of her journey he feigns to be a certain captain, which leads to some diverting, but to the Marquis embarrassing, situations. To further complicate matters, an ardent wooer, the Baron Talismani, arrives in angry mood. A reconciliation is effected with the father, speedily followed by a quarrel, and steel is drawn. The Marquis is accused of being an impostor, but unmasks; everything is satisfactorily explained, and the happiness begins, as usual, at the end of the comedy.

SCENE.—The waiting-room in the Post-Inn at Vercelli, Italy.

Enter the Marquis and the Lieutenant.

***Lieutenant.*—Hallo! landlord — hallo there! — where the devil's everybody?**

Servant.—(Coming in.) I'm here, how can I serve you, sir?

Lieu.—We want a room.

Serv.—Here's one, sir.

Lieu.—What room is it? Let's see it. (Leaves room.)

Serv.—(To Marquis.) Will you remain with us awhile, or do you leave immediately?

Marquis.—We want simply a little snack, some soup or cold meat, and meanwhile get the horses ready.

Lieu.—(In the doorway.) You have no better room than this?

Serv.—No, sir; it's the best that we can offer.

Lieu.—But I've been here before, I know you've a better one facing the street. Come, open it up, we wish to see it.

Serv.—It's occupied, sir.

Lieu.—Occupied, by whom?

Serv.—By a gentleman from Milan, with a lady, said to be his daughter.

Lieu.—Is she beautiful?

Serv.—Oh! not so bad.

Lieu.—You say they come from Milan; where are they going?

Serv.—I cannot tell you, sir.

Lieu.—But why do they remain at Vercelli?

Serv.—They arrived by the post. They are resting and have ordered dinner. After the mid-day heat is over they will continue their journey.

Lieu.—That's good. We'll dine with them, if they'll permit.

Marq.—No, no, my friend, let's push on; just a little lunch and away.

Lieu.—Now, my dear Marquis, to please you I left Turin, with ready eagerness to bear you company; but to ride on in this dust and heat I must really protest.

Marq.—And you, a military man, afraid of sun and dust!

Lieu.—If duty called I should go willingly, but nature

teaches me to avoid the disagreeable. I share your desire to see your bride-to-be, but spare your friend.

Marq.—Ho! ho! I understand. Fear of sun and heat! say rather a chance to dine with a petticoat.

Lieu.—Oh! the deuce! A few hours sooner or later, what's the difference. (Turning to the servant.) Prepare us a spread.

Serv.—You shall be served, sir.

Lieu.—See if these travellers will dine with us.

Serv.—The father has thrown himself on the bed and is asleep. I'll wait till dinner's ready, sir, before I ask.

Marq.—Well, hurry it along.

Serv.—Yes, sir, at once. (He turns to leave.)

Lieu.—Have you any good wine?

Serv.—If you wish Monferrato, we have some most excellent.

Lieu.—All right, let's try the Monferrato.

Serv.—You shall be served, sir. (Leaves.)

Lieu.—Be merry, Marquis, be merry; on the brink of matrimony you ought to be more joyful.

Marq.—True enough, but the thought that I have not as yet seen my betrothed disquiets me. I am told she is rather beautiful, well formed and amiable. I'm extremely curious to see her.

Lieu.—But how is it you find yourself obliged to marry a girl you've never seen?

Marq.—Count Robert, her father, is a nobleman of the old school, very wealthy. She is his only child. He has many relatives in Turin, among them his sister, a lady of the court who has property in Piedmont. My friends thought to do me good service by negotiating this marriage, and I, consulting my interest, consented.

Lieu.—And should she fail to please?

Marq.—I have pledged my word; I've no choice but to marry.

Lieu.—Bravo! matrimony's merely a contract; if love enters, that's over and above the bargain.

Marq.—I would that it entered!

Lieu.—Yes, solely for your welfare; however, I hope your love will not prove intense. I know your character; jealousy commingles with love. If you love her ardently, you will be constantly ill at ease.

Marq.—Truly, I know not whether it be better to have a charming wife and jealousy, or one ill-visaged and repose of mind.

Lieu.—I know what is better than either.

Marq.—And what is that?

Lieu.—Not to marry at all. Should your wife be attractive, she will charm not you alone; if homely, she will be pleasing neither to others nor to yourself. Homely, you will have a devil at home; beautiful, you will have devils both within and without your house.

Marq.—In short, you wish all to live after the manner of military men.

Lieu.—Yes, and I believe there is no better mode of life. To-day here, to-morrow there; to-day one little love affair, to-morrow another; to love, to court, to make happy, and then in a drum-tap to welcome the coming, and speed the parting ones.

Marq.—And barely arrived at the new garrison, in love again with the first girl that turns up.

Lieu.—Yes, and in the twinkling of an eye; and if the young lady now stopping here is just a wee bit coquettish, I'll show you a girl smitten with two words.

Marq.—Perhaps they won't desire our company.

Lieu.—I'll speak to the father; I'll introduce myself without ceremony, and we'll be fast friends immediately, as becomes military men.

Marq.—Nevertheless, we must hurry on.

Lieu.—Why, what's the hurry? You are not expected at Milan within a month. We'll dine, start at eight and to-morrow you can agreeably surprise your betrothed. In the meanwhile, if you wish to snatch a little rest, there is our room; I'll go into the kitchen and give an eye to the dinner. Happen

what may—if we must dine alone, with a bottle of good wine the day will not be ill-spent. (He leaves.)

Marq.—(Alone.) Bravo! my dear lieutenant; always good-humored. With what pleasure I, too, would embrace his profession. But the sole survivor of my family I must needs marry. May heaven grant me a wife amiable enough to lighten the matrimonial chain; for alas! though of gold adorned with jewels and embellished with flowers, it is none the less a chain. Liberty transcends all riches, but destiny wills that I submit to the laws of nature and contribute even at personal loss to the world's increase. (He enters his room.)

Enter the Countess; then the servant.

Countess.—Ho! Cecchino (louder) Cecchino! that fellow's always missing when I want him. It seems that I must go out if I wish—— (Calling.) Is no one here?

Servant.—Yours to command, Miss.

Countess.—Where's our valet?

Serv.—Stretched out on yonder bench, fast asleep; cannons wouldn't awaken him.

Countess.—Bring me a glass of water.

Serv.—At once, Miss. Does the Signor Count still sleep?

Countess.—Yes.

Serv.—Would you object to two gentlemen dining with you?

Countess.—When my father awakens you may ask him.

Serv.—Very well, Miss. (He goes out.)

Countess.—At any other time I should greatly enjoy agreeable companionship, but now I'm in such low spirits that I haven't the heart to see any one.

Enter the Marquis.

Marquis.—Beg pardon, Miss, are you travelling, too?

Countess.—Yes.

Marq.—May I ask where you are going?

Countess.—To Turin.

Marq.—And I am on my way to Milan, with my companion.

Countess.—Then you are going to my native land. (About to leave.) With your permission——

Marq.—Pardon, but I would like to ask a question if you would be so kind——

Countess.—Excuse me, I fear to awaken my father.

Marq.—May I ask his name?

Countess.—Count Robert di Ripalunga.

Marq.—(Aside.) Great heavens! what do I hear! It must be my betrothed. But why travelling? Why has she left Milan?

Countess.—You seem surprised. Are you acquainted with my father?

Marq.—Well, I know him by reputation. Are you, perchance, the Countess Beatrice?

Countess.—Precisely. But, how did you learn of me?

Marq.—Are you not engaged to the Marquis Leonard de' Fiorellini?

Countess.—What! you know that as well?

Marq.—Certainly, the Marquis is an intimate friend. (Aside.) I must conceal my identity until I learn the object of her trip.

Countess.—Sir—pardon my asking—who are you?

Marq.—Count Aruspici, a captain of the king's guards.

Countess.—And you are a friend of the Marquis Leonard de' Fiorellini?

Marq.—We are quite intimate.

Countess.—May I flatter myself touching a favor I wish to obtain of you?

Marq.—You have but to order, Miss. Only too happy to obey. (Servant enters with a glass of water, which he hands to the Countess.)

Countess.—(To Marquis.) You will permit?——

Marq.—I sincerely trust you will not discommode yourself. (He hands her a chair, she sits and drinks.) (Aside.) Her face pleases, and her manners charm me. My heart says unmask, but curiosity restrains me. (The servant leaves.)

Countess.—As the gentleman and man of honor I believe

you to be, I ask you to tell me, with perfect sincerity, the character of the man to whom I am to be given in marriage.

Marq.—Yes, Miss, I pledge myself to give you a full and true portraiture. I know him as I know myself, and I promise exactness. Permit me, however, to first ask why you are here instead of awaiting at Milan the Marquis Leonard, who goes there to claim his bride.

Countess.—I should tell you frankly, only I fear to awaken my father, and if he found me here alone with a stranger——

Marq.—You are conversing with an intimate friend of the man to whom you are plighted. That's surely justification enough.

Countess.—You are right, the excuse is good.

Marq.—Please then——

Countess.—Willingly. My nature is too sincere to conceal the truth. My father has promised me to an unknown gentleman, and I who have never seen him know not that we can be happy together. I would not be deterred by his lack of beauty or charming manners. The most elegant, the most brilliant young man in the world might have, in my eyes, something repellant, something that would place me under the necessity of making my aversion known to him. That which interests me more than his figure is his character. Who will guarantee me that he is good, virtuous and warm-hearted? Neither riches nor nobility will make me happy without peace of mind, and this treasure I wish to defend at all hazard by retaining the liberty Heaven has granted me. My father, despite my protestations, despite my refusals, has contracted an engagement which may sacrifice me. At Milan I have relatives that are persuaded by my reasons and who share my chagrin. My father, however, to prevent all help or escape, is taking me to Turin, where he will place me in the hands of his sister, who made this marriage, and whether the husband be pleasing or not, he is determined that I shall accept him. I was not able to resist his brusque resolution to leave. I accompany him to Turin, but resolved, firmly resolved, to make known my aversion if my betrothed is displeasing. I will throw myself at the feet of the king, demanding protection from the violence of my father, quite ready to imprison myself forever

in a convent rather than give my hand to a man who may endanger all my future happiness.

Marq.—Miss, I cannot condemn your principles, nor your fears, nor your resolutions. I pity and approve; and if I were he to whom you are destined I should leave you in full liberty, were I so unfortunate as to displease you.

Countess.—Sir, I have said all regarding myself, with frank sincerity that I may say; now tell me something of the character of your friend.

Marq.—I shall begin with his person. While not at all handsome, still, in our country he is called passably good looking.

Countess.—Very well, quite sufficient for a husband.

Marq.—You know his age?

Countess.—Yes, that is almost the only thing I have been told regarding him. I know that he still enjoys the virility of his young manhood and has been so kindly treated by nature that he appears to be younger than he really is.

Marq.—In height he is rather above the average, and is neither fat nor thin.

Countess.—To that I'm quite indifferent, but tell me something of his character, his inclinations, his habits.

Marq.—You must know that the Marquis Leonard is so much my friend that I lack the heart to speak ill of him and the courage to praise.

Countess.—I have been told that he is sometimes ill-tempered.

Marq.—Yes, but never without reason.

Countess.—Is he jealous?

Marq.—To speak the truth, I'm afraid he is—just a little.

Countess.—If you know he is jealous, then you must know he has been in love.

Marq.—Ah! Where would you find a young man in ripe virility that has had no amours?

Countess.—That displeases me seriously.

Marq.—Don't let it disturb you. He always loved with deference, honor and fidelity.

Countess.—What! he always loved! he has been in love, then, a number of times.

Marq.—(Aside.) The devil! this talk is taking a deucedly embarrassing turn. (Aloud.) I can assure you that once married, his wife will possess his entire heart.

Countess.—You can assure me?

Marq.—Most certainly. Why, I know the Marquis through and through, and am so accurately acquainted with his inmost thoughts that I could swear to them.

Countess.—What are his favorite diversions?

Marq.—Without hesitation: books, discourse and the theatre.

Countess.—That's bad, very bad. A studious husband neglects his wife easily; a husband that loves discourse is seldom pleased at home; while one that frequents the theatre finds too easily commodious opportunities to conceive new passions.

Marq.—Pardon me, Miss, but as it strikes me you err, I feel obliged to vindicate my friend's taste. Learning is an occupation of the mind not in the least interfering with the heart's affection. Love is a passion of nature which makes itself felt even in the midst of the most serious, the most delightful studies. Who knows nothing but love must feel at times lassitude and satiety, and, far worse, must bore the object of his passion. On the contrary, study gives proportion, teaches us to love with greater delicacy and to discern the better our loved one's merit. The flames of love burn more brilliantly after giving the heart repose and the mind amusement. As to conversation: unhappy the man that loves not the society of his fellow-men! It makes us cultured and polite and divests us of those savage traits that liken us to beasts. A misanthrope, a recluse can be only troublesome at home and fatiguing to his wife. Is a man that abhors conversation likely to permit it to his wife? And, however loving a couple may be at the start, if together alone day and night, are they not sure to find frequent occasions to quarrel? Thus may their tenderness easily become ennui, disgust, antipathy. Now, touching theatres, I wish particularly to assure you that as I think, so thinks the Marquis, as if we were one being and

he were speaking through my lips. The theatre is the best pastime; most useful and necessary. Clever comedies at once instruct and amuse, while tragedies teach us carefully to regulate our passions. Nor is it to the theatre persons of bad intentions turn; there the eyes of the public compel decency and good manners. In short, Signora, if you desire an honest husband, loving and well conducted, I recommend the Marquis. But if you wish an effeminate fellow, dismiss him from your thoughts at once, for you may rest assured that, reading your thought, he would be the first to liberate you.

Countess.—I confess your words reassure me, and I shall go to Turin more willingly.

Marq.—Does the character of the Marquis attract you? Are you pleased with my frank portrayal?

Countess.—Quite content; that is, I am pleased to learn that he will set me free.

Marq.—Miss, pray pardon my boldness, I fear another has won your heart.

Countess.—Not at all; if I loved I should acknowledge it openly.

Marq.—But your beauty, has it touched no heart?

Countess.—I do not say that no one loves me; I say, simply, that my heart is free.

Marq.—And who, may I ask, sighs after you?

Countess.—Ah! you are a little too curious, captain.

Marq.—You have been so frank with me that I trust you will not conceal this secret.

Countess.—It's no secret at all. Why, it's known to my father, and, I may say, to every one. To be candid, my suitor is Baron Talismani.

Marq.—I do not know him. Is he young?

Countess.—Fairly so.

Marq.—And handsome?

Countess.—Oh! sufficiently.

Marq.—And you do not love him?

Countess.—I neither love nor hate.

Marq.—Yet you would accept him as husband?

Countess.—In preference to one I do not know.

Marq.—Excuse me, I fear you are enamored with him.

Countess.—You know me badly, sir. I am not given to falsehood.

Marq.—Your prejudice against the Marquis seems to indicate that you are already in love.

Countess.—Pardon me, I'm not prejudiced against him. I doubt, I tremble and I wish to be assured of his character. Can you blame me?

Marq.—No, adorable Countess. You merit happiness. (Tenderly.) I envy the fate of the happy man who takes you to wife. He will possess in you virtue and rare beauty. Gentleness and vivacity make brilliant your charming eyes——

Countess.—(Arising.) Clearly, captain, you are advancing rather too rapidly.

Marq.—I am animated by the interest I feel in my friend.

Countess.—Well, you'd better moderate that interest.

Marq.—(Aside.) Just Heaven! I wish to ask—yet dare not.

Countess.—(About to leave.) With your permission—it's time to awaken my father.

Marq.—Pray, just one word.

Countess.—Well, what is it?

Marq.—Please speak with your accustomed sincerity. If I were he to whom you are destined in marriage would I find favor in your eyes?

Countess.—Since you are so fond of frankness, permit me to answer no.

Marq.—So you find me repellent?

Countess.—I will not say whether you please or displease me. I shall say, simply, that your last words show rather too much military license. I desire a modest, refined husband, not a savage. (She leaves.)

Marq.—(Alone.) Heavens! into what a dilemma I've brought myself. The character of the Countess is most charming, since founded on pure sincerity. But alas! I'm at the point of being refused, after seeing her, after reading in her heart, to lose her now would be painful. Then, too, she posi-

tively told me that if I were the chosen husband she would not be content. It is true she gave as motive my innocent transport; but perhaps this is a pretext only, to conceal a decided antipathy. What ought I to do? make myself known or return to Turin without seeing her again? Ah! would that I knew what to do! But here is my friend, I'll ask counsel of him, though I cannot safely rely on his prudence.

Enter the Lieutenant.

Lieutenant.—My dear fellow, we're going to fare sumptuously. We've both fat and lean, and I find the wine of Monferrato excellent. We've another guest, to boot. A gentleman friend of mine who has just arrived by the post. He's speaking, I know not of what, to the landlord now, and will join us immediately.

Marq.—What's his name?

Lieu.—Baron Talismani.

Marq.—What! Baron Talismani!

Lieu.—Why, do you know him?

Marq.—I've never seen him, but I know who he is.

Lieu.—I assure you, he's a gentleman.

Marq.—I don't doubt it. But have you told him you are with me? have you named me to him?

Lieu.—I haven't had time.

Marq.—So much the better. Please be careful not to do it.

Lieu.—What imbroglio is this? Any enmity between you two?

Marq.—Let us go into our room. I've a curious adventure to tell you.

Lieu.—Have you learned as yet if we shall have the pleasure of enjoying the society of the travelling lady?

Marq.—Come, I've something particular to tell you on this very subject.

Lieu.—Have you seen her?

Marq.—Come, let us retire; should the Baron come in, I fear an unpleasant scene. His presence here conceals some mystery. Come at once and listen, for now's the time if you

are truly my friend, to lend aid. (Aside.) Alas, I fear they love. I suspect the Countess affected a false sincerity. I burn with anger and tremble with jealousy. (He enters his room.)

Lieu.—(Alone.) What the deuce does this mean, anyway? I can't imagine. I'm sorry to see my friend so agitated, but I certainly will not lose an opportunity of diverting myself with a pleasant girl at a well-filled table. (He follows the Marquis.)

Enter Baron Talismani and the Inn-servant.

Servant.—Here, my lord, we've no other room unoccupied, unless a garret-chamber will answer.

Baron.—Where's the Lieutenant?

Serv.—Pardon me, I don't know the gentlemen apart, sir.

Baron.—It's he that spoke with me in the court-yard.

Serv.—I presume he's in that room with his travelling companion.

Baron.—And who is his travelling companion?

Serv.—I do not know, sir.

Baron.—And where is the room that the landlord told me is occupied by an old gentleman and his daughter?

Serv.—(Pointing.) It's there, sir.

Baron.—Very well, that's all I wish of you.

Serv.—I can give you a small room in the garret, sir.

Baron.—Never mind. Where do we dine?

Serv.—In this room, sir.

Baron.—Very well, I'll remain here. I've no need of another room.

Serv.—As you wish, sir. (He leaves.)

Baron.—(Alone.) Happen what may, I shall demand at least this much satisfaction; I must learn from whom this insult comes, the Count or his daughter. To leave without a single word! To permit me to go as usual to pay my addresses to the Countess and to be told by a lackey: They have left. The evening before we spent pleasantly together and yet they did not say: We leave to-morrow morning. It's insupportable disrespect, an insult.

Enter the Count (without his sword).

Count.—(On the threshold of his room.) (Aside.) What do I see! Baron Talismani here!

Baron.—(Aside.) I know not which agitates me the more, love or anger.

Count.—(Icily.) Signor Baron, permit me to salute you.

Baron.—(In the same tone.) So I salute you, Signor Count.

Count.—But why are you here, sir?

Baron.—To do my duty, sir. I have come to wish you a bon voyage and to fulfill with respect to you a civility you did not deign to show me.

Count.—You might have spared yourself the trouble. I know quite well, it is not on my account——

Baron.—Pardon me, sir, but it is on your account I have come.

Count.—And in what way can I serve you?

Baron.—I desire you to tell me what reasons induced you to leave Milan without doing me the honor of informing me of your proposed departure.

Count.—As there is no special tie between us, I did not feel under any obligations to inform you.

Baron.—But it seems to me you ought to have felt obliged by good manners, friendship, the customary politeness of good society.

Count.—In regard to good manners, I do not think I need to learn of you. You speak of friendship; learn that I am accustomed to practise it according to circumstances. As to politeness, if it were not that the respect I have for your family constrains me to silence——

Baron.—But your silence, sir, is far more disagreeable than anything you can say.

Count.—I will speak, then, to be less disagreeable. Kindly tell me if you know that my daughter is engaged to marry a gentleman from Piedmont?

Baron.—I know it very well, but I also know that she will not consent to marry a man unknown to her.

Count.—But think you that a daughter is her own mistress

and can keep her word when her father has signed the marriage contract.

Baron.—I think the authority of a father ought not to sacrifice his daughter.

Count.—But how do you know she'll be sacrificed?

Baron.—Can you assure me that she will be content?

Count.—To learn this I am taking her to Turin.

Baron.—That's all right; but why did you not announce your departure to your friends?

Count.—All my friends were advised.

Baron.—Then I haven't the honor of being regarded as a friend?

Count.—Baron, let us speak openly. The friendship you claim to feel for me is based on no sincere attachment to my person, but on love for my daughter—the only child of a father, not poor. But whatever motive may animate your desire to obtain her hand, I must regard it as unworthy of a gentleman who ought to respect the authority of a father. Perchance my daughter's resistance to the marriage I propose is due not so much to the innocence of her heart as to the pride excited by the clever flatteries of her attendant lover. Beatrice is sensible and well-mannered; hence I have reason to suspect that her disobedience is due to some secret passion. On you alone as its author can my suspicions fall. I feared if I confided in you my intention to conduct my daughter to Turin that you would induce in her so great an opposition that I should be compelled to use force. This is the reason I concealed my departure from you. I certainly had no intention of hurting your feelings, and if I have done so, pray pardon me. Put yourself in the place of a gentleman who has pledged his word and excuse an old father.

Baron.—Freely, Count, your excellent reasons justify you and your courteous explanations please me. I shall confess the truth, I esteem highly your charming daughter—or, to be more truthful, I love her tenderly. Would to Heaven I were worthy to possess her! I love her not for any selfish interest in her dowry, but for the virtue and beauty with which she is adorned. I swear on my word of honor that I have had no

part in the opposition she has shown your wishes. I am incapable of attempting to incite in her such opposition, nor is she weak enough to yield. If I have given cause for displeasure, pray pardon me; excuse an honorable passion due to your daughter's charm. I assure you of my highest respect and ask to be numbered among your friends.

Count.—Ah, my dear friend, you honor and you console me. I esteem, nay, I love you; let this embrace be its token. (They embrace.)

Baron.—Count, may I be permitted to ask a favor?

Count.—By all means; what would I not do for a gentleman of your merit?

Baron.—Let me accompany you to Turin.

Count.—No, excuse me, that is something I cannot permit.

Baron.—And why not?

Count.—I am astonished that you ask. Can an honorable father conduct his own daughter to her husband with a lover by her side?

Baron.—But I accompany you in no character other than the father's friend.

Count.—But one cannot separate easily the friend of the father from the lover of the girl.

Baron.—I'm an honorable man.

Count.—Then be satisfied with my reasons.

Baron.—Very well, if I cannot go with you, at least you cannot prevent my following at a distance.

Count.—But I can, one way or another, prevent your remaining in Turin.

Baron.—How?

Count.—By informing the Court of your dangerous insistence.

Baron.—You are an enemy, then, and sought to flatter me by swearing a false friendship.

Count.—Rather you tried to lull my just suspicions by deceitful phrases.

Baron.—People of my quality do not lie.

Count.—People of your quality ought to know their duty better.

Baron.—I know my duty, and, moreover, I can teach you yours.

Count.—The boldness of your speech is a manifest proof of your bad intentions and your unworthy love.

Baron.—He is no gentleman, sir, that speaks ill of another.

Count.—I am a gentleman and I do not repent of my suspicions.

Baron.—You shall answer for your insults.

Count.—Wait a moment, my sword shall answer for me. (He turns to enter his room.)

Enter the Countess.

Countess.—For Heaven's sake, father, stop!

Count.—Ungrateful daughter. Behold revealed the mystery of your refusal (pointing to the Baron). There stands the man that has instigated your disgraceful disobedience. There's the object of your flame, the man that has caused you to hate your betrothed.

Baron.—(Aside.) Ah! may Heaven grant he speaks truth!

Countess.—No, father, you are mistaken. No one has had the audacity to counsel me, nor am I so easily persuaded and conquered. I cherish my liberty so highly that I dare to defend it against him even that has given me life. No one but you, sir, has the right to command me, and I should obey you blindly were it not a sacrifice so great, so uncertain and so perilous. My heart is still free.

Baron.—(Aside.) And I flattered myself she loved me!

Count.—(Aside.) I wish to assure myself if she is sincere or trying to overreach me. (Aloud.) You fear, then, the Marquis Leonard may prove displeasing?

Countess.—My fear is not unreasonable.

Count.—And, if he isn't to your taste, you are resolved to refuse him?

Countess.—Pardon me, be charitable.

Count.—Truly, I do not wish you to regard me as a tyrant

that would do violence to your heart and make you unhappy forever. I hoped, by taking you away from Milan, to see you more resigned, as I feared you cherished a secret passion. I believe, now, your heart is free. I see that your resistance comes from firm resolutions; and, as I do not wish to compromise my paternal authority in Turin, we shall return to Milan. I shall find some method to reject the Marquis and restore you to full liberty. But as this will cause much gossip and criticism, it will be well for you to choose another,—one that pleases you more. Baron Talismani is a thorough gentleman. I blamed him unjustly, believing him to share your secrets. I see that he is innocent, and am sorry I offended him. If, then, he can forget my vivacity, if he still desires your hand and if you are willing to bestow it upon him, I offer him to you for husband.

Baron.—Ah! Count, you overwhelm me with joy and gratitude. I forget the distress I have suffered to obtain such an amiable wife and such a generous and honorable father-in-law.

Countess.—Gently, sir, these titles of wife and father-in-law are rather premature. I am grateful to my father for his kindness and tender condescension, but I cannot decide so suddenly.

Baron.—Alas! You refuse my hand?

Countess.—The time and circumstances of the offer are unpropitious. You find me on my way to see a husband that has been offered me; you know that I am in danger of displeasing my father by not accepting this husband, or of placing my father in a delicate position should he, to please me, break the contract. Do you think it honorable to make an offer that would open the way to so much dissension and enmity?

Baron.—Excuse me, Miss, you show yourself to be the very spirit of contradiction.

Count.—Pay my daughter proper respect. She is more sensible and shows better judgment than you do.

Baron.—I am quite tired of these continued insults——

Count.—(To the Baron.) Calm yourself a moment. (To his daughter.) What is your intention?

Countess.—To continue our trip, to see the proposed hus-

band and assure myself of his character and habits. Though he may please me but little, if he be honorable and kind I shall prefer him to any other, because chosen by you. Should my heart, however, compel me to strongly dislike him, I will have the courage to manifest my aversion and so gain my freedom and liberate you from the contract. My repose and your honor are equally dear to me.

Count.—Yes, my daughter, it is well thought out, and I flatter myself that Heaven will bring things about to your satisfaction.

Baron.—Whatever may be the scene to come, I shall go to Turin to witness it.

Count.—You will not dare to do it.

Baron.—Your authority is not great enough to prevent it.

Count.—Fools are chastised everywhere.

Baron.—I, a fool, go get your sword.

Countess.—What audacity!

Enter the Lieutenant.

Lieutenant.—Slowly, gentlemen, slowly. A truce to threats. I have heard your dispute, and now that you are about to fight, I come forward to reconcile you.

Count.—Signor, I have not the honor of your acquaintance.

Lieu.—I'm one of his majesty's officers. Lieutenant Malpresti, at your service.

Countess.—And you are the travelling companion of the captain?

Lieu.—(Laughing.) Yes, Signora, of the captain.

Count.—(To his daughter.) How did you get acquainted with this captain?

Countess.—Well, I saw him here—and I spoke to him. He is an intimate friend of the Marquis Leonard. He spoke of him at length, told me of many good traits, but, to be candid, I am not entirely satisfied.

Lieu.—Pay no attention, Signora, to what my companion told you. He is rather capricious; he is very fond of the Marquis, as fond, indeed, as he is of himself, and, as he is too

modest to eulogize himself, he uses the same reticence in speaking of his friend. Rely on me, I know him equally well and am not prevented from speaking by the same delicacy. The Marquis is one of the most honorable, one of the most amiable men in the world.

Baron.—Signor Lieutenant, it's not worth while disturbing yourself to interfere.

Lieu.—Believe me, I do not disturb myself on your account. I stepped out to prevent a duel and to bring calm and joy to the soul of this young lady. If she goes to Turin she fears she will be sacrificed, yet I can assure her that many a girl would welcome such a sacrifice. The Marquis is a well-favored gentleman with a generous heart; and, above all else, is perfectly sincere.

Countess.—All that you say pleases me, especially his sincerity. But, tell me truly, is he not ill-tempered?

Lieu.—Certainly not.

Countess.—Nor jealous?

Lieu.—Not in the least.

Countess.—Doesn't he devote his time to books, conversation and the theatres?

Lieu.—He uses all discretely and with moderation.

Enter the Marquis.

Marquis.—No, Signora, place no faith in what the Lieutenant tells you. He is the Marquis' friend as much as I am, and his great affection leads him to hide the truth.

Lieutenant.—(To the Marquis.) What! you have the courage to tell me I lie?

Marq.—Sincerity constrains me.

Lieu.—Do not believe him, I know the Marquis intimately, Miss.

Marq.—Be assured, Miss, that I know him better than he.

Baron.—And here's a new dispute arising, Signora, on your account!

Marq.—Reassure yourself, sir, we won't fight. The Lieutenant may say whatever he pleases; I insist that while the

Marquis is a man of honor, this young lady must be told that he is given to fits of anger and jealousy. If she is not disposed to accept him with these faults let her return to Milan calmly. She has nothing to fear from the insistence of this gentleman.

Countess.—But how can you vouch for the Marquis?

Marq.—I feel quite sure of what I say, otherwise I would not speak.

Countess.—Excuse me, captain, you make me doubt your sincerity.

Baron.—Ah! Countess, accept the word of an honorable officer. What more do you want? He assures you that the Marquis is not adapted for you.

Marq.—That is not what I said, sir. I said that the refusal of the Countess would not be regarded as an insult from her nor from her father. At another time and place I shall ask of you an explanation of your evil intention.

Baron.—I hope the Marquis will be a more reasonable being!

Countess.—Let us cut short these importunate discussions, by leaving at once, if you are willing, father, for Turin.

Marq.—Spare yourself this trip. I advise you not to go.

Countess.—And for what reason, sir?

Marq.—Because the Marquis will not please you.

Countess.—But you cannot be sure of that.

Marq.—I am most certain.

Countess.—On what grounds?

Marq.—On your own words.

Countess.—Perhaps when I have seen him I shall find him more amiable than you have described him.

Lieu.—You will be content beyond the shadow of a doubt.

Marq.—It is impossible.

Count.—Sir, you make me suspect that you have conceived secret designs upon my daughter's honor, and that you seek to turn her from the contracted marriage.

Baron.—It would be nothing strange if he were an impostor.

Marq.—I marvel at your impudence. I am a man of honor, and to prove it, I shall unmask: I am the Marquis Leonard.

Countess.—(Aside.) Oh Heavens! what a surprise!

Baron.—(Aside.) Ah! I fear my hopes are lost.

Count.—Sir, why did you feel obliged to conceal yourself under a feigned name, and surprise us in this strange manner?

Marq.—Desire to see my bride-to-be has accelerated my trip to Milan, and chance has united all of us at this post-inn. The sincerity of the Countess Beatrice has uncovered her soul to me, while honor has constrained me to inform her of my character and habits. I now perceive that my manner of life does not suit her, that my faults are insupportable and that my person has little to recommend it in her eyes. It would be treason to my heart to exact love of one so noble. She is amiable, virtuous and gracious; but Heaven has not destined her for me.

Countess.—Ah! sir, permit me to tell you that I am not displeased at your appearance, and that I am charmed with your virtues. Can there be in the whole world another man with a soul so generous and so strong a love for truth that he does not hesitate to disparage himself to the one he loves. You are endowed with an excellent heart and a perfect sincerity, can you fear that I will not respect, esteem, adore you? Be angry; with your high principles, anger must have just cause. Be jealous; with you, jealousy must wait for sufficient grounds. Be charmed with society and books; I am persuaded that your friendships and studies will be always praiseworthy. It will be my affair to avoid giving you motives for suspicion or uneasiness, and to so act that a tender and loving wife will not be counted least among your pleasures. Pity my apprehensions, and pardon if I have been too fastidious. Be assured that I love and shall love you always, and that Heaven has made me expressly for you.

Marq.—Ah! if all that you say is true I am the happiest man alive!

Count.—My friend, you have had ample opportunity of learning my daughter's character. She is incapable of falsehood or of being duped by caprice.

Lieu.—Happy the world if such sincere women could be

found, I shall not say in large numbers, but only four or five in the hundred!

Count.—Signor Marquis, if agreeable to you, let us all go to Milan. Once there, according to our previous arrangement, let us conclude the marriage.

Marq.—Yes, let us leave, if it pleases my adorable Countess.

Countess.—Lead me where you will; I'm with my father and my husband, and could not be more content.

Lieu.—Yes, let us go, gentlemen. But, with your permission, let us first enjoy a good dinner and do honor to the precious wine of Monferrato.

Baron.—I confess that I do not deserve to be one of your party, but I pray you to believe me your friend, sorry that I have given you just cause for displeasure. I assure you, sir, that——

Marq.—No more, Signor, I accept your apology; and to prove to my wife that I am neither excessively ill-tempered nor foolishly jealous, I beg you to dine with us and to bear us company during our journey! O journey most felicitous for me! O fortunate post-inn! (Turning to the audience.) Yet more fortunate, if found worthy of the indulgence and favor of those that listen.

The Post-Inn, though little read and seldom acted, is undoubtedly one of the best of Goldoni's comedies. While the plot is slight, the situations are effective and are never overstrained; the dialogue is sprightly and vivacious, witty in places and never tedious, and without any trace of coarseness or vulgarity. We find here all the grace and elegance characteristic of the Italian drama; for the Italian people, even more than the French, are a nation of artists; they are, moreover, natural artists, following no rules or traditions, as do their northern neighbors, but with the utmost reverence for the great masterpieces bequeathed to them as heirlooms

by those whom the world has exalted to the highest pinnacle in the temple of fame. Nowhere are the manners and tastes of a people so clearly reflected as in their drama; and though Goldoni's comedy does not deal with art, it gives us the drama in its most artistic form. Especially fine are the speeches of Beatrice toward the end, where her lover reveals his true identity, and his mistress, womanlike, loves him the more for the faults she had condemned, but which seem to her as virtues when confessed by his own lips.

MYRRHA

By Vittorio Alfieri.

(*Translated from the Italian and Edited by Edgar A. Bowring, C.B.*)

PERSONAGES.

CINYRAS.
CECRIS, his Wife.
MYRRHA, his Daughter.
PEREUS, Myrrha's Lover.
EURYCLEIA, Cecris' Friend.
CHORUS.
PRIESTS.
PEOPLE.

SCENE—THE PALACE IN CYPRUS.

Myrrha.

ARGUMENT.

Myrrha, the daughter and only child of Cinyras, King of Cyprus, and his wife Cenchreis—or Cecris, as Alfieri calls her—is betrothed to Pereus, heir to the throne of Epirus, and the scene is laid just before the proposed wedding. But Myrrha, while recognizing the merits of the prince, suffers in secret from an anguish that she cannot, or will not, explain. In the midst of the ceremony she is seized with an attack of frenzy, and announces that the Furies have taken possession of her, whereupon Pereus puts an end to their marriage, rushes off in despair, and kills himself. Myrrha's father tells her the story of Pereus' death, and says he is satisfied she is in love with some one else, promising that, whoever it may be, he will consent to her union with him. At last, when hard pressed, she lets slip words which show it is with himself she is in love. Then she seizes her father's dagger and stabs herself, inflicting a fatal wound. The story is taken from Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* and though condemned by some critics, including Schlegel and Sismondi, was highly commended by others, and was a special favorite with the author.

ACT I. SCENE I.

Cecris, Eurycleia.

Cecris.—Come, faithful Eurycleia: now the dawn
Scarce glimmers; and to me so soon as this
My royal consort is not wont to come.
Now, thou canst tell me all that thou dost know
Of our afflicted daughter. Even now
Thy troubled face, and thy half-stifled sighs,
Announce to me . . .

Eurycleia.— O queen! . . . Unhappy Myrrha
Drags on a life far worse than any death.
I dare not to the monarch represent
Her dreadful state: the troubles of a maiden
Ill could a father understand; thou canst,
A mother. Hence to thee I come; and pray
That thou wilt hear me.

Ce.— It is true, that I
For a long time have seen the lustre languish
Of her rare beauty: obstinate and mute,
A mortal melancholy dims in her
That fascinating look: and, could she weep! . . .
But, when with me, she's silent; and her eyes
With tears are pregnant, though forever dry.
In vain do I embrace her; and in vain
Request, entreat her, to divulge her grief:
Her sorrow she denies; while day by day
I see her by her grief consumed.

Eu.— A daughter
To you is she by blood; to me, by love;
Thou knowest that I brought her up: and I
Exist in her alone; and almost half
Of the fourth lustre is already spent,
Since ev'ry day I've clasp'd her to my breast
In my fond arms. . . . And now, can it be true,
That e'en to me, to whom she was accustom'd
From earliest childhood to divulge each thought,
That e'en to me she now appears reserved?

And if I speak to her of her distress,
To me too she denies it, and insists,
And seems displeased with me. . . . But yet she oft,
Spite of herself, bursts into tears before me.

Ce.—Such sadness, in a bosom still so young,
At first I deem'd to be the consequence
Of the irresolution which she felt,
In the oft-urged selection of a spouse.
The most illustrious, pow'rful potentates
Of Greece and Asia, all in rivalry
From the wide-spreading rumor of her beauty,
To Cyprus flock'd: and, as respected us,
She was the perfect mistress of her choice.
These various impulses, unknown, discordant,
Might in a youthful bosom well excite
No slight disturbance. She his valor praised
In one; his courteous manners in another:
This with a larger kingdom was endow'd;
In that were majesty and comeliness
Blended consummately: and he who caught
Her eyes the most, she fear'd perchance the least
Might gratify her father. Thoroughly
I, as a mother and a woman, know
What conflicts, in the young unpractised hearts
Of timid virgins, might be well excited
By such uncertainty. But, when by Pereus,
Heir of Epirus, ev'ry doubt seem'd banish'd;
To whom, for pow'r, nobility, and youth,
Valor, and comeliness, and sense, not one
Could be compared; then, when the lofty choice
Of Myrrha gave such pleasure to us all;
When she, on this account, ought to exult
With self-congratulation; we behold
The storm more furiously arise within her,
And more insufferable agonies
Consume her ev'ry day! . . . At such a sight,
I feel my heart as if asunder torn.

Eu.—Ah, had she never made that fatal choice!
From that day forth, her anguish has increased:
This very night, the last one that precedes

Her lofty nuptial rites (O Heav'ns!), I fear'd
That it had been to her the last of life.—
Motionless, silent, lay I in my bed,
From hers not far remote; and, still intent
On all her movements, made pretence to sleep:
But I for months and months have now beheld her
In such a martyrdom, that all repose
Flies from my aged limbs. I for thy daughter
The comfort of benignant Sleep invoked
Most silently within myself; for o'er her
For many, many nights he has not spread
His downy wings.—Her sobs and sighs at first
Were almost smother'd; they were few; were broken:
Then (hearing me no longer) they increased
To such ungovernable agony,
That, at the last, against her will, they changed
To bitter tears, to sobs, to piercing screams.
Amid her lamentations, from her lips
One word alone escaped: "Death! . . . death!"; and oft,
In broken accents, she repeated it.
I started from my couch; and hastily
I ran to her: and scarce had she beheld me,
When, in the midst, she suddenly repress'd
Each tear, each sigh, each word; and, recomposed
In royal stateliness, as if almost
Incensed with me, in accents calm she cried:
"Why comest thou to me? what wouldst thou with me?" . . .
I could not answer her; I wept, embraced her,
Then wept again. . . . At length my speech return'd.
O! how did I implore her, how conjure her,
To tell me her affliction, which, at last,
Thus in her bosom pent, would, with her life,
My life destroy! . . . Thou surely, though a mother,
Couldst not have spoken to her with more fond,
And more persuasive love.—She well doth know
How much I love her; and, at my discourse,
Once more the torrents from her eyes gush'd forth,
And she embraced me, and with tenderness
To my fond importunities replied.

But still, inflexibly reserved, she said
That ev'ry maiden, when the nuptial day
Approaches, is oppress'd with transient grief;
And she commanded me to hide it from you.
But so deep-rooted is her malady,
So fearful are its inward ravages,
That I run tremblingly to thee; and beg
That, by thy means, these rites may be delay'd:
To death the maiden goes, be sure of this.—
Thou art a mother; I say nothing more.

Ce.—. . .Ah! . . . choked by weeping . . . scarcely . . . can I speak.—
Whence can this malady arise, ah, whence? . . .
No other martyrdom, at her young age,
Is there, except the martyrdom of love.
But, if she is inflamed by love for Pereus,
Whom of her own accord she chose, say, whence,
When on the point of gaining him, this grief?
And, if another flame feed on her heart,
Wherefore hath she herself selected Pereus
Among so many others?

Eu.— . . . Her fierce grief
Doth not, I swear to thee, arise from love.
She always was observed by me; nor could she,
Without my seeing it, resign her heart
To any passion. And she would, be sure,
Have told it me; her mother as to years,
But, in our love, a sister. Her deportment,
Her countenance, her sighs, her very silence,
Ah! all convince me that she loves not Pereus.
She, if not joyous, was, before she chose him,
Tranquil at least: and thou know'st well how she
Delay'd her choice. But yet, assuredly
No other man pleased her, ere she saw Pereus:
'Tis true, she seem'd to give to him the pref'rence,
Because it was, or so at least she deem'd it,
Her duty to choose one. She loves him not;
To me it seems so: yet, what other suitor,
Compared with noble Pereus, can she love?
I know her to possess a lofty heart;

A heart in which a flame, that is not lofty,
Could never enter. This I safely swear:
The man that she could love, of royal blood
Must be; or else she would not be his lover.
Now, who of these ye have admitted here,
Whom at her will she could not with her hand
Make happy? Then her grief is not from love.
Love, though it feeds itself with tears and sighs,
Yet still it leaves I know not what of hope,
That vivifies the centre of the heart;
But not a ray of hope is gleaming on her:
Incurable her wound; alas, too surely! . . .
Ah, could the death, that she invokes forever,
Be granted first to me! I should, at least,
Not see her thus by a slow fire consumed! . . .

Ce.—Thou dost distract me. . . . To these marriage rites
Never will I consent, if they are destined
To take from us our only daughter. . . . Go;
Return to her; and do not say to her
That thou hast spoken with me. I myself,
Soon as the tears are from my eyes dispersed,
And my face recomposed, will thither come.

Eu.—Ah! quickly come. I will return to her;
I am impatient once more to behold her.
O Heav'ns! who knows if she has not once more
Been with these frantic paroxysms seized,
While I have thus at length with thee conversed?
Alas! what pity do I feel for thee,
Unhappy mother! . . . I fly hence; but thou,
Ah, linger not! . . . The less that thou delayest,
The more good wilt thou do. . . .

Ce.— How much delay
Costs me, thou mayst conceive: but I will not
Call her at such an unaccustom'd hour,
Nor go to her, much less present myself
With troubled countenance. It is not fit
To strike her either with distress, or fear:
So modest, timid, pliable is she,
That no means with that noble disposition

Can be too gentle. Quickly go; in me
Repose, as I in thee alone repose.

SCENE II.

Cecris.

Cecris.—What can it be? A year has well-nigh pass'd,
Since I was first tormented by her grief;
And yet no trace whence Myrrha's sorrow springs
Can I discern!—Perchance the gods themselves,
Envious of our prosperity, would snatch
From us so rare a daughter, the sole comfort,
Sole hope of both her parents? O ye gods,
'Twere better never to have giv'n her to us!
O Venus! thou sublime divinity
Of this to thee devoted, sacred isle,
Perchance her too great beauty moves thy envy?
And hence perchance thou, equally with her,
Reducest me to this distracted state?
Ah! yes, thou wilt that I should thus atone
In tears of blood, for my inordinate,
Presumptuous transports of a loving mother. . . .

SCENE III.

Cinyras, Cecris.

Cinyras.—Weep not, O lady. I have briefly heard
The painful narrative; to this disclosure
Constrain'd I Eurycleia. Ah! believe me,
Sooner a thousand times would I expire,
Than with our idolized and only daughter
Adopt coercive means. Who could have thought
That by this marriage, which was once her choice,
She could be brought to such extremity?
But, let it be dissolved. My life, my realm,
And e'en my glory are as nothing worth,
If I see not our only daughter happy.

Cecris.—Yet, Myrrha ne'er was fickle. We beheld her
In understanding far surpass her years;
Discreet in ev'ry wish; and constant, eager
Our smallest wishes to anticipate.
She knows full well, that in her noble choice
We deem'd ourselves most fortunate: she cannot,
No, never, hence repent of it.

Cin.— But yet,
If she in heart repent of it?—O lady,
Hear her: and all a mother's gentle pleadings
Do thou adopt with her; do thou at length
Compel her to unfold her heart to thee,
While there is time for this. And I meanwhile
Will mine unfold to thee; and I assure thee,
Nay, e'en I swear, that, of my heart's first thoughts,
My daughter is the object. It is true,
Epirus' king I wished to make my friend:
And the young Pereus, his distinguish'd son,
Adds, to the future hope of a rich kingdom,
Other advantages, in my esteem
More precious far. A gentle character,
A heart no less compassionate than lofty,
Doth he evince. Besides, he seems to me
By Myrrha's beauties fervently inflamed.—
I never could select a worthier consort
To make my daughter happy; and no doubts
Of these pledged marriage rites torment his heart;
His father's indignation and his own,
If we renounced our covenanted faith,
Would be most just; and their rage might to us
Be even terrible: in this behold
Many and potent reasons in the eyes
Of ev'ry other prince; but none in mine.
Nature made me a father; chance, a king.
Those which are deem'd by others of my rank
Reasons of state, to which they are accustom'd
To make all natural affections yield,
In my paternal bosom would not weigh
Against one single sigh of my dear daughter.
I, by her happiness alone, can be

Myself made happy. Go; say this to her;
Assure her, also, that she need not fear
Displeasing me, in telling me the truth:
Naught let her fear, except the making us,
Through her own means, unhappy. I meanwhile,
By questions artfully proposed, will learn
From Pereus if he deem his love return'd;
And thus will I prepare him for the issue,
No less afflicting to himself than me.
But yet, the time is brief for doing this,
If fate decree that we retract our purpose.

Ce.—Thou speakest well: I fly to her.—It brings
Great solace to me, in our grief, to see
That one accordant will, one love, is ours.

ACT II. SCENE I.

Cinyras, Pereus.

Pereus.—Behold me here, obedient to thy wishes.
I hope, O king, the hour is not far distant,
When with the loving epithet of father
I may accost thee. . . .

Cinyras.— Listen to me, Pereus.—
If thou well know thyself, thou canst not fail
To be convinced what happiness a father
Who loves his only daughter must experience
At having thee as son-in-law. 'Tis certain,
Had I myself been destined to select
A spouse for Myrrha, I had chosen thee
Among the many and illustrious rivals
Who, with thyself, contended for her hand.
Thence, thou thyself mayst judge how doubly dear
Thou wert to me, when by herself elected.
Thou, in the judgment of impartial men,
In all pretensions wert unparagon'd;
But, in my judgment, more than for thy blood,
And thy paternal kingdom, thou both wert,
And art, the first for other qualities

Intrinsically thine, whence thou wouldst be,
E'en if a private man, eternally
Greater than any king. . . .

Pe.— Ah father! . . . (I
E'en now exult to call thee by this name)
Father, my greatest, nay, my only prize,
Consists in pleasing thee. I have presumed
To interrupt thee; pardon me: but I
Cannot, before I merit them, receive
From thee so many praises. To my heart
Thy speech will be a high encouragement,
To make me that which thou believ'st me now,
Or wishest me to be. Thy son-in-law,
And Myrrha's consort, largely should I be
With ev'ry lofty quality endow'd:
And I accept from thee the augury
Of virtue.

Cin.— Ah! thou speakest as thou art.—
And, since thou art such, I shall dare to speak
To thee as to a son.—I clearly see
Thou lovest Myrrha with a genuine love;
And I should wrong thee most unworthily,
Could I e'en doubt of this. But, . . . tell me now; . . .
If my request is not too indiscreet, ...
Art thou as much beloved?

Pe.— . . . I ought to hide
Nothing from thee.—Ah! Myrrha would, methinks,
Love me again, and yet it seems she cannot.
I cherish'd once a hope of her regard;
And yet I hope to gain it; or, at least,
My flatt'ring wishes still prolong the dream.
'Tis true, that, most inexplicably, she
Persists in her reserve. Thou, Cinyras,
Although thou be a father, still retainest
Thy youthful vigor, and remember'st love:
Know then, that evermore with trembling steps,
And as if by compulsion, she accosts me;
Over her face a deadly pallor steals;
Her lovely eyes are never turned towards me;
A few irresolute and broken words

She falters out, involved in mortal coldness;
Her eyes, eternally suffused with tears,
She fixes on the ground; in speechless grief
Her soul is buried; a pale sickliness
Dims, not annihilates, her charms divine:—
Behold her state. Yet, of connubial rites
She speaks; and now thou wouldst pronounce that she
Desired those rites; now, that, far worse than death,
She dreaded them; now, she herself assigns
The day for them, and now, she puts it off.
If I inquire the reason of her sadness,
Her lip denies it; but her countenance,
Of agony expressive, and of death,
Proclaims her great, incurable despair.
Me she assures, and each returning day
Repeats, that she would have me as her spouse;
She says not that she loves me; lofty, noble,
She knows not how to feign. I wish and fear
To hear from her the truth: I check my tears;
I burn, I languish, and I dare not speak.
Now from her faith, reluctantly bestow'd,
Would I myself release her; now again
I fain would die, since to resign her quite
I have no pow'r; yet, unpossess'd her heart,
Her person would I not possess. . . . Alas! . . .
Whether I live or die, I scarcely know.—
Thus, both oppress'd, and though with diff'rent griefs,
Both with affliction equally weigh'd down,
We have at last the fatal day attain'd,
The day which she herself irrevocably
Hath chosen for our marriage. . . . Ah, were I
The only victim of such deep distress!

Cin.—As much as she, dost thou excite my pity. . . .
Thy frank and fervid eloquence bespeaks
A soul humane and lofty: such a soul
Did I ascribe to thee; hence to thyself
I will not less ingenuously speak.—
I tremble for my child. I share with thee
A lover's grief; ah, prince! do thou too share
A father's grief with me. Ah, if she were

Unhappy by my means! . . . 'Tis true, she chose thee;
'Tis true that none constrain'd her . . . but, if fear,
Or maiden modesty . . . In short, if Myrrha
Now should repent her promise wrongfully? . . .

Pe.—No more; I understand thee. To a lover,
Who loves as I do, canst thou represent
The cherish'd object wretched for his sake?
Could I, though innocently, deem myself
The origin of all her wretchedness,
And not expire with grief?—Ah! Myrrha, now
Pronounce on me, and on my destiny,
A final sentence: fearlessly pronounce it,
If Pereus' love be irksome: yet for this
Never shall I regret that I have loved thee.
O, could I make her joyful by my tears! . . .
To me 'twould be a blessing e'en to die,
So that she might be happy.

Cin.— Pereus, who
Can hear thee without weeping? . . . No, a heart
More faithful, more impassion'd than thine own,
There cannot be. Ah! as thou hast to me,
Couldst thou disclose it also to my daughter:
She could not hear thee, and refuse to open
To thee with equal confidence her own.
I do not think that she repents her choice
(Who, knowing thee, could do this?); but perchance
Thou mayst solicit from her heart the source
Of her conceal'd distress.—Behold, she comes;
I had already summon'd her. With her
I leave thee; to the interview of lovers,
Fathers are ever a restraint. Now, prince,
Fully reveal to her thy lofty heart,
A heart by which all others must be sway'd.

SCENE II.

Myrrha, Pereus.

Myrrha.—With Pereus doth he leave me? . . . Fatal trial!
This rends my heart indeed. . . .

Pereus.— At length, O Myrrha,
The day is come, which, wert thou only happy,
Should render me supremely happy also.
Thy hair with nuptial coronal adorn'd,
Thy form enveloped in a festal robe,
I see indeed: but on thy countenance,
Thy looks, thy gestures, and in ev'ry step,
Pale melancholy lours. O Myrrha, he
Who loves thee more, far more than life itself,
Cannot behold thee with a mien like this
To an indissoluble tie approach.
This is the hour, the solemn hour is this,
When 'tis no more allowable for thee
To pass delusions on thyself, or others.
Thou shouldst divulge to me (whate'er it be)
The cause of thy distress; or shouldst at least
Confess that thou dost not confide in me;
That I have ill-responded to thy choice,
And that at heart thou hast repented of it.
I shall not hence account that I am wrong'd;
O no! though this sad heart will be surcharged
With mortal wretchedness. But, what car'st thou
For the distraction of a man not loved,
And slenderly esteem'd? It too much now
Concerns me not to render thee unhappy.—
Then speak to me explicitly and boldly.—
But, thou art mute and motionless! . . . Thy silence
Breathes but disdain and death . . . thy silence is
An answer too decisive: thou dost hate me;
And dar'st not say it. . . . Now resume thy faith:
I instantly prepare myself to fly
Forever from thine eyes, since I am thus
An object of aversion. . . . But if I
Was always so, how could I win thy choice?
If I became so afterwards, ah, tell me;
In what I have offended thee?

My.— . . . O prince! . . .
Thy overweening love depicts my grief
More poignant than it is. Beyond the bounds
Of truth thy heated phantasy impels thee.

With silence thy unprecedented words
I hear; what wonder? unexpected things,
And little pleasing, and, e'en more than this,
Not true, dost thou express: how can I then
Reply to thee?—This, for our nuptial rites,
Is the appointed day; I come prepared
For their fulfilment; does my chosen spouse
Venture meanwhile to harbor doubts of me?
'Tis true, perchance my spirits are not radiant,
As hers should be who doth obtain a spouse
Distinguish'd like thyself: but pensiveness
Is oft a second nature; ill could one
Who feels its potent sway, explain the cause:
And often an officious questioning,
Instead of making manifest the cause,
Redoubles the effect.

Pe.— I'm irksome to thee;
I see it by unquestionable symptoms.
I knew indeed that thou couldst never love me;
Yet in my feeble heart I had caress'd
At least the flatt'ring hope thou didst not hate me:
In time, for thine and my peace, I discern
That I deceived myself.—'Tis not (alas!)
Within my pow'r to make thee hate me not:
But on myself doth it alone depend
To make thee not despise me. Now art thou
Freed, and released from all thy promised faith.
Against thy will 'twere vain to keep thy promise:
Not by thy parents, and still less by me,
But by false shame, art thou restrain'd. Thou wouldst,
Not to incur the blame of fickleness,
Render thyself, thine own worst enemy,
The victim of thy error: and dost thou
Hope I should suffer this? Ah, no!—That I
Love thee, that I perchance deserved thee, this
I ought to prove now, by refusing thee. . . .

My.—Thou dost delight to drive me to despair. . . .
Ah! how can I be joyous in thy presence,
If I am destined always to behold
Thy love ill-pleased with mine? Can I assign

The causes of a grief, which, in great measure,
Is but supposititious? which, indeed,
If true in part, p'rhaps has no other cause,
Than the new state which I'm about to enter;
The sad necessity of separation
From my belovèd parents; and the words
So oft repeated to myself: "Ah! maybe
I never more shall see them;" . . . the departure
For other realms unknown; the change of sky; . . .
And other thoughts, by thousands and by thousands,
All passionate and tender, and all sad;
And all indisputably better known,
And felt more keenly, than by any other,
By thy humane and courteous lofty heart!—
I gave myself spontaneously to thee:
Nor do I feel repentance; this I swear.
If it were so, I would have told it to thee:
Thee, above all men, I esteem: from thee
Nothing would I conceal, . . . that I would not
Likewise from my own consciousness conceal.
Now, I implore; let him who loves me best,
Speak to me least of this my wretchedness,
And 'twill in time, I feel assured, depart.
Could I, not prizing thee, give thee my hand,
I should despise myself: and how not prize thee? . . .
My lips could never utter what my heart
Doth not dictate: and yet those lips assure thee,
Swear to thee, that I never will belong
To any one but thee. What more can I
Profess to thee?

Pe.— . . . Alas! I venture not
To ask of thee one thing, which, couldst thou say it,
Would give me life. But fatal the demand!
'Twere death, I fear, to be assured of this.—
Thou to be mine, then, dost not now disdain?
Dost not repent of it? and no delay? . . .

My.—No; 'tis the day; to-day will I be thine.—
But, let our sails be hoisted to the winds
To-morrow, and forever let us leave
These shores behind us.

Pe.— Do I hear thee rightly?
With such abrupt transition how canst thou
Thus differ from thyself? It tortures thee
So much to have to leave thy parents dear,
Thy native country; yet wouldst thou depart
Thus speedily, forever? . . .

My.— Yes; . . . forever
Will I abandon them; . . . and die . . . of grief. . . .

Pe.—What do I hear? Thy anguish hath betray'd thee; . . .
Thy words and looks are prompted by despair.
I swear that I will never be the means
Of thy destruction; never; of my own
Too certainly. . . .

My.— 'Tis true; 'tis too, too true;
I am distracted by a mighty woe. . . .
But no, believe me not.—Inflexibly
I to my purpose keep.—While I have thus
My bosom harden'd as it were with grief,
My parting hence will be less keenly felt:
A solace in thyself. . . .

Pe.— No, Myrrha, no:
I am the cause, I am (though innocent),
Of the dread conflict, which thus lacerates,
And agitates thy heart.—My hateful presence
No longer shall impose restraint on thee.—
Do thou thyself, O Myrrha, to thy parents
Propose some means, that may deliver thee
From ties so inauspicious; or from them
Thou'lt hear to-day the cruel death of Pereus.

SCENE III.

Myrrha.

Myrrha.—Ah, go not to my parents! . . . Hear me, . . . hear me! . . .
He flies from me. . . . O Heavn's! what have I said?
Let me to Eurycleia quickly run:
No, not one instant would I with myself
Remain alone. . . .

SCENE IV.

Myrrha, Eurycleia.

Eurycleia.— O whither dost thou fly
Thus with such breathless haste, belovèd daughter?
Myrrha.—Where can I find, if not in thee, some solace? . . .
To thee I came. . . .
Eu.— I, from a distance, long
Have watch'd thee carefully. Thou knowest well,
I never can abandon thee: I hope
That thou wilt pardon me. From thence I saw
Pereus rush troubled forth; and thee I find
With heavier grief oppress'd: ah! dearest daughter;
Thy tears at least may freely have a vent
Upon my breast.
My.— Ah, yes; dear Eurycleia,
With thee I may at least shed tears. . . . I feel
As if my heart would burst from checking them. . . .
Eu.—And wilt thou, in a state like this, persist,
O daughter, in these hymeneal rites?
My.—I hope my agony may kill me first. . . .
But no; that cannot be; the time's too short; . . .
It afterwards will kill me, kill me soon. . . .
Death, death, I have no other wish but death; . . .
And death alone is all that I deserve.
Eu.—Myrrha, no other furies can assail
With such barbarity thy youthful breast,
Save those of love. . . .
My.— What dar'st thou say to me?
What cruel falsehood? . . .
Eu.— Ah, do not, I pray thee,
Be wroth with me. For a long time I've thought so:
But if it thus displease thee, I will dare
No more to say it to thee. Ah, mayst thou
Preserve with me the liberty of weeping!
Neither do I know well if I believe
What I have said; moreover, to thy mother
I hitherto have solemnly denied it. . . .

My.—What do I hear? O Heav'ns! does she perchance
Also suspect it? . . .

Eu.— And who, seeing thus
A tender maiden in excessive grief,
Would not deem love the origin of this?
Ah! were thy grief from love alone! at least
Some remedy might then be found.—Immersed
For a long time in this perplexing doubt,
I to the holy altar went one day
Of Venus, our sublime divinity;
With tears, with incense, and persuasive prayers,
With mournful heart, before her sacred image
Prostrate, I ventured to pronounce thy name. . . .

My.—Ah! what audacity! what hast thou done?
Venus? . . . O Heav'ns! . . . inimical to me. . . .
The force of her implacable revenge. . . .
What do I say? . . . Alas! . . . I shudder, . . . tremble. . . .

Eu.—'Tis true indeed that I in this did wrong:
The angry deity disdain'd my vows;
The incense, in a smold'ring gloom involved,
With difficulty burn'd; and, downwards driven,
The smoke collected round my hoary head.
Wouldst thou hear further? 'I presumed to raise
To the stern image my afflicted eyes,
And, horribly incensed with indignation,
With threat'ning looks the goddess seem'd to me
Herself to drive me from her sacred feet.
With trembling steps, I totter'd from the temple,
Palsied with fear. . . . In telling this, I feel
My hair with horror once more stand on end.

My.—And thou with terror mak'st me also shudder.
What hast thou dared to do? By Myrrha now
Must no celestial pow'r, and much less that
Of our tremendous goddess, be invoked.
I am abandon'd by the gods; my breast
Is open to the onslaught of the Furies;
There they alone authority possess,
And residence.—Ah! if there still remains

In thee the shadow of a genuine pity,
My faithful Eurycleia (thou alone
Canst do it), save me from despair: 'tis slow,
Too slow, although 'tis infinite, my grief.

Eu.—Thou mak'st me tremble. . . . What can I?

My.— . . . I ask thee
My woes to shorten. My weak frame thou seest
Wearing away by little and by little;
My ling'ring agonies destroy my parents;
A burden to myself, a curse to others,
I never can escape: 'twere pity, love,
To expedite my death; from thee I ask it. . . .

Eu.—O Heav'ns! . . . from me? . . . My very utt'rance fails, . . .
My breath, . . . my thoughts——

My.— Ah, no; thou lov'st me not.
I weakly deem'd that in thy aged breast
There dwelt a comprehensive tenderness. . . .
Yet thou thyself didst in my tender years
Exhort me to nobility of thought:
Oft have I heard from thee, how virtuous souls
Should death prefer to infamy. Alas! . . .
What do I say? . . . But thou dost hear me not? . . .
Motionless, . . . mute, . . . thou scarcely breath'st! O Heav'ns! . . .
What have I said? distracted with my pangs, . . .
I know not what I said: ah! pardon me;
My second mother, be once more thyself.

Eu.—. . . O daughter, daughter! . . . Thou ask death from me?
Thou death from me?

My.— Esteem me not ungrateful;
And think not that the anguish of my woes
Robs me of pity for the pangs of others.—
Wouldst thou not see me dead in Cyprus? soon
Thou'lt hear that I Epirus reach'd, a corpse.

Eu.—'Twere vain, then, to endure these dreadful nuptials.
I to thy parents fly to tell the whole——

My.—Ah, do it not, or irretrievably
Thou forfeitest my love: ah, do it not;

I pray thee: in the name of thy true love,
I do conjure thee.—From a troubled heart
Accents escape, which should not be recorded.—
An ample solace (one which hitherto
I've not allow'd) hath been my tears with thee;
The speaking of my grief: in me already
My courage hence is doubled.—A few hours
Are wanting to the solemn nuptial rites:
Be ever near me: let us go: meanwhile,
It is thy province to confirm me more
In my inevitable lofty purpose.
Thou, by thy faithful counsel, and thy more
Than mother's love, at once shouldst strengthen me.
Thou shouldst so act, that firmly I may follow
The sole remaining honorable track.

ACT III. SCENE I.

Cinyras, Cecris.

Cecris.—There is no doubt that Pereus, though he be
Not yet return'd to us, by Myrrha's words
Was greatly mortified. She loves him not;
Of this I'm sure; she'll go to certain death,
If in these nuptials she should persevere.

Cinyras.—For the last trial now, will we ourselves
Hear from her lips the truth. I, in thy name,
Have summon'd her to meet thee in this place.
Neither of us, in short, would force her will:
How much we love her, well she knows, to whom
Ourselves are not less dear. To me it seems
Now utterly impossible, that she,
In this respect, should close to us her heart;
To us, who made her arbitress and mistress
Not only of herself, but of ourselves.

Ce.—Behold, she comes: and O! she seems to me
Somewhat more joyful; and her step more firm. . . .
Ah! could she be again what once she was!
At the sole reappearance in her face

E'en of a flash of joy, I quickly seem
Restored once more to life.

SCENE II.

Myrrha, Cinyras, Cecris.

Cecris.— Belovèd daughter,
Ah, come to us! ah, come!
Myrrha.— What do I see?
O Heav'ns! my father also! . . .
Cinyras.— Haste, advance;
Our only hope and life; advance securely;
And do not fear the aspect of thy father,
More than thou fear'st thy mother's. We are both
Ready to hear thee. Now, if thou art pleased
The cause to tell us of thy cruel state,
Thou giv'st us life; but if it please thee
Rather to hide it, thou mayst also, daughter,
Conceal it; for thy pleasure will be ours.
Before the nuptial knot is tied forever,
One hour alone is wanting; ev'ry one
Deems it a thing decided: but, if yet
Thy will is changed; if thy committed faith
Be irksome to thy heart; if thy free choice,
Though once spontaneous, be no longer such;
Be bold, fear nothing in the world, reveal
All the misgivings of thy heart to us.
Thou art by nothing bound; and we ourselves
The first release thee; and the gen'rous Pereus,
Worthy of thee, confirms this liberty.
Nor will we tax thee with inconstancy:
Rather will we admit, that thoughts mature,
Though unforeseen, constrain thee to this change.
By reasons base thou never canst be moved:
Thy noble character, thy lofty thoughts,
Thy love for us, full well we know them all:
A step of thee, and of thy blood unworthy,
Thou never couldst e'en think of. Freely, then,

Do thou fulfill thy wish; provided thou
Art once more happy, with that happiness
Thou renderest thy parents happy also.
Now, this thy present will, whate'er it be,
Do thou to us reveal it, as to brothers.

Ce.—Ah, yes! thou see'st it well; for ne'er didst thou
Hear words of more persuasive tenderness,
More mild, more tender, from thy mother's lips
Than these.

My.— . . . Is there a torment in the world,
That can compare with mine? . . .

Ce.— But what is this?
Sighing, thou talkest to thyself?

Cin.— Ah, let,
Ah, let thy heart speak to us: we will use
No other language with thee.—Quick, reply.

My.—. . . My lord . . .

Cin.— Ah, Myrrha, 'tis a sad beginning:
To thee I am a father; not a lord:
Canst thou invoke me with another name,
O daughter?

My.— Myrrha, this is the last conflict.—
Be strong, my soul. . . .

Ce.— O Heav'ns! The hues of death
Upon her countenance . . .

My.— On mine? . . .

Cin.— But whence
Tremblest thou thus? at me? . . .

My.— I tremble not, . . .
Methinks; . . . or I, at least, no more shall tremble,
Since ye now so compassionately hear me.—
Your only, your too well belovèd daughter,
Well know I that I am. I see you always,
My joys enjoying, grieving in my griefs;
E'en this my grief increases. Mine, alas!
Passes the bounds of natural distress;
In vain I hide it; and to you would speak it, . . .
If I knew it myself. My fatal sadness

With growing years augmented ev'ry day,
Long ere, amid th' illustrious company
Of noble suitors, Pereus I selected.
Within my breast an angry deity,
Unknown, inexorable, dwells; and hence,
All pow'r of mine is vain against his pow'r. . . .
Mother, believe me; though I be but young,
My mind, e'en passing ordinary strength,
Was, and is, strong: but my distemper'd frame
Is fast succumbing; . . . and I feel myself,
With gradual footsteps, tott'ring to the tomb. . . .
—My rare and little food to me is poison:
Sleep everlastingly forsakes my pillow;
Or dreams, with horrid images of death,
Give greater martyrdom than sleepless nights:
I do not find, throughout the day or night,
A moment's peace, repose, or resting place.
Yet nothing in the shape of human comfort
Do I presume to covet; death I deem,
Expect, solicit, as my only cure.
But, for my punishment, still Nature keeps me,
With her strong ties, alive. I pity now,
And now I hate, myself: I weep, and rave,
And weep again. . . . This, this is the incessant,
Insufferable, fierce vicissitude,
In which I drag along my heavy days.—
But what? . . . do ye, too, at my horrid state
Shed tears? . . . Belovèd mother! . . . let me then,
To thy breast clinging, drinking in thy tears,
Forego the sense of suff'ring for a moment! . . .

Ce.—Belovèd daughter, at a tale like this,
Who could refrain from weeping? . . .

Cin.— At her words
I feel my bosom rent. . . . But finally,
What ought we now to do? . . .

My.— But finally
(Ah! trust to what I say), I ne'er conceived
The wish to vex you, or extort from you
Vain pity for myself, describing thus

My fierce unutterable pangs.—When I,
By choosing Pereus, fix'd my destiny,
At first, 'tis true, I to myself appear'd
Somewhat less troubled; but, within my heart
Proportionably fierce my grief return'd,
As nearer and more near the day approach'd
For forming the indissoluble tie;
So much so, that three times indeed I dared
To beg you to procrastinate the day.
In these delays I somewhat calm'd myself;
But, as the time diminish'd, all my pangs
Resumed their wonted fierceness. To their height,
To my consummate shame, consummate grief,
Are they to-day arrived: but something tells me
That they, to-day, are giving in my breast
The last proof of their strength. This day shall see me
The spouse of Pereus, or a breathless corpse.

Ce.—What do I hear? . . . O daughter! . . . Wilt thou thus
In these lugubrious nuptials persevere? . . .

Cin.—No, this shall never be. Thou lov'st not Pereus;
And, spite of inclination, thou, in vain,
Wouldst give thyself to him. . . .

My.— Ah, do not ye
Take me from him; or quickly give me death. . . .
'Tis true, perchance, I love him not as much
As he loves me; . . . and yet, of this I doubt. . . .
Believe, that I sufficiently esteem him;
And that no other man in all the world,
If he have not, shall ever have my hand.
I hope that Pereus, as he ought to be,
Will to my heart be dear; by living with him
In constant and inseparable faith,
I hope that he will make both peace and joy,
Return to me again: that life may be
Still dear to me, and peradventure happy.
Ah! if I hitherto have loved him not
As he deserves, 'tis not a fault of mine,
But rather of my state; which makes me first
Abhor myself. . . . Him have I chosen once:

And now, again I choose him: long for him,
Solicit him, and him alone. My choice
Beyond expression to yourselves was grateful:
Be then, as ye did wish, as now I wish,
The whole accomplish'd. Since I show myself
Superior to my grief, do ye so likewise.
As joyfully as may be, soon will I
Come to the nuptials: ye will find yourselves
Some day made happy by them.

Ce.— O rare daughter!
How many true perfections thou unitest!

Cin.—Thy words a little calm me; but I tremble. . . .

My.—I feel, while thus in conference with you,
My strength return. I may again perchance
Wholly become the mistress of myself
(If the gods will), provided ye will lend
Me your assistance.

Cin.— What assistance?

Ce.— Speak!
We will do ev'rything.

My.— I am constrain'd
Once more to grieve you. Hear.—To my worn breast,
And to my troubled, weak, distemper'd mind,
The sight of objects new to me will prove
A potent remedy; and this will be
Effectual in proportion as 'tis speedy.
What it will cost me to abandon you
(O Heav'ns!), I cannot say; my tears will tell it,
When I bid you the terrible farewell:
If, without falling lifeless, . . . in thy arms,
I can, O mother, do it. . . . But, if yet
I can abandon you, the day will come,
When, to this gen'rous effort, I shall owe
Life, peace, and happiness.

Ce.— Dost thou thus speak
Of leaving us? Wouldst do it instantly?
At once dost fear and wish to do it? Whence
Such inconsistency? . . .

Cin.— Abandon us? . . .
And what remains to us, if reft of thee?
Thou mayst at leisure afterwards depart
To Pereus' father; but meanwhile ere this
With us enjoy protracted happiness. . . .

My.—If here I cannot possibly be happy,
Would ye prefer to see me dead in Cyprus,
Or know me happy on a foreign shore?—
Sooner or later, to Epirus' realm
My destiny invites me: there should I
With Pereus finally abide. To you,
When Pereus his paternal sceptre sways,
One day will we return. Ye shall again
In Cyprus see me, if the gods so grant,
The joyful mother of a num'rous offspring:
And we will leave to you, of all my children,
The one ye may love best, to be the prop
Of your declining years. Thus of your blood
Shall ye possess an heir to this rich realm;
Since offspring of the stronger sex, the gods
Have hitherto denied to you. Then ye,
The day on which ye suffer'd me to go,
Will be the first to hail with blessings.—Ah,
Grant that to-morrow Pereus may with me
Spread to the wind our sails. Within my heart
I feel a certain and tremendous presage,
That I, if ye prohibit my departure,
Alas! within this inauspicious palace,
To-day the hapless victim will remain
Of an inscrutable and unknown power:
That ye will lose me everlastingly. . . .
Do ye, I pray, compassionately yield
To my unhappy presage; or be pleased,
Indulging my distemper'd phantasy,
To second what perchance you deem an error.
My life, my destiny, and also (Heav'ns!
I shudder as I speak) your destiny,
All, all, too much depend on my departure.

Ce.—O daughter! . . .

Cin.— Ah! . . . Thy accents make us tremble. . . .
But yet, if such thy will, so be it done.
Whate'er may be my grief, I would prefer
Never to see thee, than to see thee thus.—
And thou, sweet consort, standest motionless,
In tears? . . . Consentest thou to her desire?

Ce.—Ah! could her absence kill me, as (alas!)
I feel assured that I shall hence be doom'd
In tears to live disconsolate forever! . . .
Ah! might the augury prove one day true,
Which she suggested of her precious offspring! . . .
But yet, since such is her fantastic wish,
So that she lives, let it be gratified.

My.—Belovèd mother, now thou givest me
Life for the second time. Within an hour
Shall I be ready for the nuptial rites.
Whether I love you, time will prove to you;
Though now I seem impatient to forsake you.—
Now, for a little while, do I retire
To my apartments: fain would I appear
With tearless eyes before the altar; meeting
My noble spouse with brow serene, and cheerful.

SCENE III.

Cinyras, Cecris.

Cecris.—Unhappy parents we! unhappy daughter! . . .

Cinyras.—Yet, to behold her ev'ry day more sad,
My heart hath not the firmness. 'Twere in vain
To be opposed. . . .

Ce.— O spouse! . . . A thousand fears
Invade my heart, lest her excess of grief,
When she is parted from us, should destroy her.

Cin.—From her expressions, from her looks and gestures,
And also from her sighs, it seems to me
That by some superhuman agency
She's fearfully possess'd.

Ce.— . . . Ah! well I know,
Implacable, vindictive Venus, well,
Thy rigorous revenge. Thus dost thou make me
Atone for my irrev'rent arrogance.
But innocent my daughter was; I only
Was the delinquent; I alone the culprit. . . .

Cin.—O Heav'ns! what hast thou dared against the goddess?

Ce.—Unhappy I! . . . Hear, Cinyras, my fault.—
When I beheld myself the spouse adored
Of one who was so loving as a husband,
A man for captivating grace unequall'd,
And by him mother of an only daughter
(For beauty, modesty, and sense, and grace
Throughout the world unrivall'd), I confess,
Intoxicated with my happy lot,
I dared deny to Venus, I alone,
Her tributary incense. Wouldst thou more?
Insensate, and extravagant, at last
To such a pitch (alas, how ill-advised!)
Of madness I arrived, that from my lips
I suffer'd the imprudent boast to fall,
That by the wondrous, celebrated beauty
Of Myrrha, now more votaries were drawn
From Asia and from Greece, than heretofore
Were e'er attracted to her sacred isle,
By warm devotion to the Cyprian queen.

Cin.—O! what is this thou say'st? . . .

Ce.— Lo, from that day
Henceforward, Myrrha lost her peace; her life,
Her beauty, like frail wax before the fire,
Slowly consumed; and nothing in our hands
From that time seem'd to prosper. Afterwards
What did I not attempt to soothe the goddess?
What prayers, what tears, what penitential rites
Have I not lavish'd? evermore in vain.

Cin.—Ill hast thou done, O woman; and still worse
Hath been thy guilt, in keeping it from me.
A father wholly innocent, perchance
I might, by means of mediatorial rites,

The pardon of the goddess have obtain'd:
And yet perchance (I hope) I may succeed.—
But meanwhile, now indeed do I concur
In Myrrha's judgment: that we must perforce,
And with what promptitude we can effect it,
Remove her from this consecrated isle.
Who knows? perchance the anger of the goddess
Will not to other climes pursue her: hence
Our wretched daughter, feeling in her breast
Such strange forebodings, yearns perchance so deeply
For her departure, on it founds such hopes.—
But Pereus comes: he's welcome: he alone,
By taking her away from us, can now
For us our daughter save.

Ce.— O destiny!

SCENE IV.

Cinyras, Pereus, Cecris.

Pereus.—Tardy, irresolute, and apprehensive,
And full of mortal wretchedness, ye see me.
A bitter conflict lacerates my heart:
I have, by pity and a genuine love
Of others, not of self, been conquer'd. This
Will cost my life. No otherwise this grieves me,
Than that I thus have forfeited the power
To spend it in your service: but I will not,
No, I will never drag to hopeless death
My dearest Myrrha. The disastrous tie
Shall now be torn asunder; and, with that,
The thread of my existence.

Cinyras.— O my son! . . .
Still by this name I call thee; and I hope
That thou ere long wilt be my son indeed.
We, since thyself, have heard explicitly
The secret thoughts of Myrrha: I have taken,
As a true father, ev'ry means with her,
So that she now, with absolute free will,

Her own unbiass'd judgment may pursue.
But 'mid the winds the rock is not so firm,
As she is firm to thee: thee, thee, alone
She wills, and she solicits; and she fears
Lest thou be taken from her. She knows not
Herself how to adduce to us a cause
For her despondency: her health infirm,
Which was the first effect of this, perchance
Is now its only cause. But her deep grief
Deserves much pity, be it what it may;
Nor should she wake in thee, more than in us,
Any dissatisfaction. A sweet solace
Thou of her ills wilt be: on thy firm love
Her hopes are founded all. What stronger proof
Wouldst thou require than this? she will herself
At ev'ry risk abandon us to-morrow
(Us, who so dearly love her!); and for this,
The reason given is to be with thee
More absolutely, to become more thine.

Pe.—Ah, could I trust to this! but specially
This her abrupt departure. . . . Ah, I tremble,
Lest she in thought designs the instrument
To make me of her death.

Cecris.— To thee, O Pereus,
Do we confide her: fate to-day decrees it.
Too certainly, before our very eyes,
Here would she lifeless fall, if to her will
Our hearts permitted us to persevere
In opposition. Change of place and scene
Potently operates on youthful minds.
Then lay aside all inauspicious thoughts;
And think alone of making her more happy.
Bring to thy countenance its wonted joy;
And, by avoiding mention of her grief,
Soon wilt thou see that grief itself subside.

Pe.—May I believe, then, certainly believe,
That Myrrha hates me not?

Cin.— From me thou mayst
Believe it, yes! What heretofore I said,

Remember; by her words I'm now convinced,
That, far from being cause of her distress,
She deems these nuptials her sole remedy.
She must be treated with indulgence; thus
She will submit to anything. Go thou;
Quickly prepare thyself for festive pomp;
And at the same time ev'rything dispose,
For taking from us by to-morrow's dawn
Our much-loved daughter. We will not assemble
Before the altar of the public temple,
In sight of all the dwellers here in Cyprus;
For the long rite would be an obstacle
To such a quick departure. We will chant
The hymeneal anthems in this palace.

Pe.—Thou hast restored me suddenly to life.
I fly; and here will instantly return.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

Eurycleia, Myrrha.

Myrrha.—Dear Eurycleia, yes: thou seest me
Completely tranquilized; and almost joyous,
At my resolved departure.

Eurycleia.— Can this be? . . .
Alone with Pereus wilt thou hence depart? . . .
Nor, of so many of thy faithful handmaids,
Wilt thou select e'en one? Not even me
Wilt thou distinguish from this wide neglect? . . .
What will become of me, my dearest child,
If thou abandon me? alas! I feel
Ready to die at the mere thought of this. . . .

My.—Ah! hold thy peace. . . . One day I shall return. . . .

Eu.—Ah! may the Heav'ns grant this! Belovèd daughter! . . .
I did not think that thou wert capable
Of such a stern resolve: I always hoped
That thou at last would close my dying eyes. . . .

My.—I should have chosen thee, and thee alone,
If I, by any means, could have resolved

To take an inmate of this palace with me. . . .
But on this point am I inflexible. . . .

Eu.—And at to-morrow's dawn thou go'st from hence? . . .

My.—I from my parents have at length obtain'd
Permission to do this; the rising sun
Will see our vessel wafted from this shore.

Eu.—Auspicious be the day to thee! . . . Could I
Know thou wert only happy! . . . 'Tis, in truth,
A cruel and a mortifying joy,
That thou dost manifest in leaving us. . . .
Yet, if it please thee, I will weep, though mute,
With thy afflicted mother. . . .

My.— Wherefore thus
My heart already too assailable
Dost thou assail? . . . Why force me thus to weep? . . .

Eu.—And how can I suppress my bursting tears? . . .
This is the last time that I shall behold,
And shall embrace thee. Thou forsakest me,
With many years bow'd down, and still more bow'd
With wretchedness. I shall be in my grave
At thy return, if that should ever be:
Some tears, I hope that . . . thou at least wilt give . . .
To the remembrance . . . of thy Eurycleia. . . .

My.—For pity's sake . . . O! quit me; or at least
Be silent.—I command thee; hold thy peace.
It is my duty now to be to all
Inflexible; and chiefly to myself.—
This is a day to nuptial joy devoted.
Now, if thou e'er hast loved me, I require
Of thee to-day the last hard proof of this;
Restrain thy tears, . . . and mine.—I see already
My spouse approaching. Let all grief be mute.

SCENE II.

Pereus, Myrrha, Eurycleia.

Pereus.—Thy father, Myrrha, hath transported me
With unexpected joy: my destiny,

Which I expected trembling, he himself
Hath cheerfully announced to me as happy.
Since thou wilt have it so, to-morrow's dawn,
At thy command, shall see my sails unfurl'd.
At least I'm pleased that both thy parents yield
Contentedly and placidly to this:
For me no other pleasure can there be,
Save that of satisfying thy desires.

Myrrha.—Yes, much-loved spouse; for by this tender name
Already I accost thee; if a wish
My bosom ever fervently inspired,
I am all-burning at the break of day
To go from hence, in company with thee,
And so I will. To find myself at once
With thee alone; no longer to behold
Display'd before my sight the many objects
So long the witnesses, perchance the cause,
Of my distress; to sail in unknown seas;
To land in countries hitherto unseen;
To breathe a fresh invigorating air;
And evermore to witness at my side,
Beaming with exultation, and with love,
A spouse like thee; all this, I am convinced,
Will in a short time make me once again
Such as I used to be. Less irksome then
I trust that I shall be to thee. Meanwhile,
My state will stand in need of some indulgence;
But, be assured that this will not last long.
My grief, if never to my mind recall'd,
Will be eradicated soon. Do thou,
Of my abandon'd and paternal realm,
Of my disconsolate and childless parents,
In short, of nothing, that was once my own,
Once precious to my heart, remind me ever,
Nor even breathe to me their thrilling names.
This, this will be the only remedy
That will forever staunch the bitter fount
Of my all-fearful, never-ceasing tears.

Pe.—Strange and unparallel'd is thy design,
O Myrrha: ah, may Heav'n in mercy grant

That thou mayst not, when 'tis too late, repent it!—
Yet, though my heart the flatt'ring thought admits not
Of being dear to thee, I am resolved
Blindly to execute each wish of thine.
Provided that my destiny decrees
That I should ne'er be worthy of thy love,
My life, which only for thy sake I keep
(That life which I had sacrificed already
With my own hand, if I had been to-day
Forced to relinquish thee), this life of mine,
Since for this sacred purpose thou hast deign'd
To make a choice of me, I consecrate
Forever to thy grief. To weep with thee,
If thou shouldst wish it; with festivity,
And mirthful sports, to make the time pass by
With lighter wings, and cheat thee of thy cares;
With care unceasing, to anticipate
All thy desires; to show myself at all times,
Whichever most thou wishest me to be,
Thy husband, lover, brother, friend, or servant;
Behold, to what I pledge myself: in this,
And this alone, my glory and my life
Will all be centred. Yet, by this unmoved,
If thou canst never love me, still, methinks,
I cannot be the object of thy hate.

My.—What say'st thou? Learn, ah! better learn to know,
Better to value Myrrha and thyself.
To thy so numerous endowments, thou
Addest such boundless love, that thou deservest
A far, far diff'rent object to myself.
Love in my bosom will enshrine his fires,
When he has clear'd it of its blighting tears.
An ample and indubitable proof
Of this, thou'lt find, in seeing that to-day
I choose thee as the healer of my woes;
That I esteem thee, that with lofty voice
I hail thee as my only true deliv'rer.

Pe.—Thou dost inflame me with excessive joy:
Never till now did accents sweet as these
Flow from thy beauteous lips: within my heart

Engraved in characters of fire they live.—
Behold, the priests, and all the festal train,
And our dear parents, hither come. My spouse,
Ah! may this moment be to thee propitious,
As it is now the brightest of my life!

SCENE III.

Priests, Chorus of Children, Maidens, and old Men; **Cinyras**, Cecris, People, Myrrha, Pereus, Eurycleia.

Cinyras.—Belovèd children, I infer, at least,
A joyful augury from seeing you
Going before us to the sacred rite.
On thy face, Pereus, transport is express'd;
And I behold my daughter's countenance
Serene and resolute. The deities
With looks benign assuredly regard us.—
With copious incense be the altars heap'd;
Peal forth the song, to make the gods propitious;
And let your grateful and devoted hymns
In sounding accents echo to the skies.

Chorus.—Hymen, benignant deity, of Love
The brother, of frail man the soothing friend;
On us propitiously do thou descend;
And bid henceforth these happy votaries prove
A flame so pure from thy inspiring breath,
That nothing may extinguish it, but death.—

Children.—Come to us, Hymen, with triumphant joy;
Borne on thy brother's wings, descend below;

Maidens.—With his own craft deceive the treach'rous boy,
Rob him of darts, of quiver, and of bow.

Old Men.—But do thou come exempt from all his arts,
His soft caprices, and insidious sighs:

Chorus.—And deign, O Hymen, to unite two hearts,
In mutual love unmatch'd, with thy firm ties.

Eurycleia.—Daughter, what ails thee? dost thou tremble? . . .
Heav'ns! . . .

Myrrha.—Peace. . . peace . . .

Eu.— But yet——

My.— No, no; I do not tremble.—

Chorus.—Mother sublime of Hymen, and of Love,
A goddess e'en among the gods art thou;
Whose high supremacy in heav'n above,
Or in the earth, none dare to disavow;
From old Olympus' heights, O Venus, deign
Upon this pair propitiously to smile;
If e'er the rites of this thy sacred isle
Thy kind protection haply might obtain.

Children.—Those peerless charms from thee derive their birth,
Bestow'd on Myrrha with such lavish wealth;

Maidens.—Restoring her once more to joy and health,
Be pleased to leave thy image on the earth;

Old Men.—Lastly, make her the mother of a race
So noble, that their father may confess,
Grandsires, and subjects, that past wretchedness
Is all forgotten in their matchless grace.—

Chorus.—Benignant goddess, gloriously unfold,
From the pure azure of the heav'nly height,
Drawn by thy swans with plumes of downy white,
Throned in thy chariot of translucent gold,
Thy form majestical; and by thy side
Have thy two sons; thy rosy veil so fair,
As at thy shrine they kneel, cast o'er this pair,
And let two bodies one sole spirit hide.

Cecris.—Yes, daughter, yes; with meek subserviency
Thou always soughtest to secure the favor
Of our all-pow'rful goddess. . . . But, alas! . . .
Thy count'nance changes? . . . Thou art faint, and trembling? . . .
And scarce thy falt'ring knees——

My.— For pity's sake,
Do not, O mother, with thy accents bring
My constancy to too severe a test:
I cannot answer for my countenance; . . .
But this I know, the purpose of my heart
Is steady and immutable.

Eu.— I feel
As if, for her, I were about to die.

Pereus.—Ah! more and more her countenance is troubled? . . .
O what a tremor now assaults my frame!—

Chorus.—Pure Faith, and Concord, lasting and divine,
Have placed in this fond couple's breast their shrine;
And fell Alecto, and her sisters dread,
In vain their torches' lurid glare would shed
On the brave bosom of the bride so fair,
Whose praises all our pow'r exceed:
While deadly Discord, frantic with despair,
Upon himself in vain doth feed. . . .

My.—What is it that ye say? My heart already
By all the baneful Furies is assail'd.
See them; the rabid sisters round me glare
With sable torches, and with snaky scourge:
Behold the torches, which these nuptials merit. . . .

Cin.—O Heav'ns! what do I hear?

Ce.— My child, thou ravest. . . .

Pe.—O fatal rites! ye ne'er shall be perform'd. . . .

My.—But what? the hymns have ceased? . . . Who to his breast
Thus clasps me? Where am I? What have I said?
Am I a spouse already? . . .

Pe.— Thou art not,
Myrrha, espoused; nor shalt thou ever be
The spouse of Pereus: this I swear to thee.
Not less intense, but different to thine,
The execrable Furies tear my heart.
Thou hast made me a fable to the world;
And to myself, e'en more than I'm to thee,
An object of abhorrence: I for this
Will not make thee unhappy. Thou hast now,
Though 'gainst thy will, in full betray'd thyself:
And thou hast finally beyond all doubt
Proved the invincible and long aversion,
Which thou hast cherish'd tow'rds me. Both are happy,
That thou hast thus betray'd thyself in time!
Now from the self-imposed and hated yoke

Art thou released forever. Safe art thou,
And from all ties exempt. Henceforth will I
Remove forever from thy troubled sight
My odious presence. . . . Satisfied, and happy,
I'll make thee now. . . . Ere long shalt thou be told
What was the last resource of him who lost thee.

SCENE IV.

Cinyras, Myrrha, Cecris, Eurycleia, Priests, Chorus, People.

Cinyras.—The rite is now profaned; hence, hence this pomp,
This ineffectual pomp; let all hymns cease.
Meanwhile, O priests, withdraw elsewhere. I fain
(Unhappy sire!) would weep at least unseen.

SCENE V.

Cinyras, Myrrha, Cecris, Eurycleia.

Eurycleia.—Ah! far more dead than living, Myrrha stands:
See ye that I can scarce support her form?
O daughter! . . .

Cinyras.— Women, leave her to herself
A prey, and to her own flagitious Furies.
She, with her unexampled waywardness,
Spite of myself, at last hath render'd me
Inflexible and cruel: for her state
No more I feel compassion. She herself,
Almost against the wishes of her parents,
Would to the altar come: and this alone
To shame us with her own disgrace and ours? . . .
Thou too compassionate, deluded mother,
Leave her: if hitherto we were not stern,
The day at length is come to be so.

Myrrha.— Yes:
'Tis as it should be: Cinyras, be thou
With me inexorable; for naught else

I wish; naught else I will. He, he alone
Can terminate the bitter martyrdom
Of an unhappy and unworthy daughter.—
Plunge thou within my breast that vengeful sword,
Which now is hanging idly by thy side:
Thou gavest me this wretched, hateful life;
Take thou it from me: lo! the last, last gift
For which I supplicate thee. . . . Ah, reflect,
If thou thyself, and with thy own right hand,
Dost not destroy me, thou reservest me
To perish by my own, and for naught else.

Cin.—O daughter! . . .

Cecris.— O sad words! . . . O speechless anguish! . . .
Ah! thou'rt a father; thou a father art; . . .
Wherefore exasperate her? . . . Is she not
Sufficiently afflicted? . . . Thou see'st clearly
That she is scarce the mistress of herself;
Her reason sinks beneath her mighty anguish. . . .

Eu.—O Myrrha, . . . daughter, . . . dost thou hear me not? . . .
My tears, . . . prevent . . . my utterance . . .

Cin.— O state! . . .
By such a dreadful sight I am o'ercome . . .
Ah! yes, I am e'en yet too much a father;
And of all fathers most unfortunate. . . .
Already by compassion, more than rage,
Am I possess'd. I will betake myself
Elsewhere to weep. Watch over her, meanwhile.—
As soon as she shall have regain'd her reason,
She must prepare to hear her father speak.

SCENE VI.

Cecris, Myrrha, Eurycleia.

Eurycleia.—Ah see, once more her senses she resumes. . . .

Cecris.—Leave me alone with her. good Eurycleia;
I would speak to her.

SCENE VII.

Cecris, Myrrha.

Myrrha.— Has my father gone? . . .
He, then, he will not kill me? . . . Ah, do thou
In pity, mother, give to me a sword;
Ah, yes; if there indeed remains in thee
The shadow of thy love for me, a sword
Give me thyself, without delay. I am
In full possession of my faculties;
And well I know the mighty consequence
Of this my fervent prayer: ah, trust for once
My judgment; trust it while there yet is time:
Thou wilt repent hereafter, but in vain,
If thou to-day dost grant me not a sword.

Cecris.—Belovèd child, . . . O Heav'ns! . . . assuredly
From grief thou ravest. From thy mother thou
Wouldst never ask a sword. . . . Now let us speak
No more of nuptial rites: a strength of mind,
Not to be parallel'd, hath led thee on
To execute thy promise; but, in truth,
Stronger than self was nature: fervently
For this I thank the gods. Thou shalt be ever
Clasp'd in the arms of thy indulgent mother:
And if to endless tears thou'rt self-condemn'd,
I will weep also evermore with thee,
Nor ever, even for an instant, leave thee:
We will be one in all things; e'en thy grief,
Since it will not abandon thee, will I
Appropriate to myself. And thou shalt find
In me a sister, rather than a mother. . . .
But what, O Heav'ns, is this? . . . Belovèd child, . . .
Art thou incensed against me? . . . repellest me? . . .
Refusest to embrace me? and dost dart
Indignant and exasperated looks? . . .
Alas! O daughter, . . . e'en towards thy mother? . . .

My.—Ah! too much it increases my despair,
Even the seeing thee: thou, more and more,

Rendest my heart when thou embracest me. . . .
Alas! . . . what do I say? . . . Belovèd mother! . . .
A vile, ungrateful, and unworthy daughter
Am I, who love deserve not. Leave thou me
To my dire destiny; . . . or if thou feel
For me true pity, I repeat it to thee,
Kill me.

Ce.— Ah, rather should I kill myself,
If I were doom'd to lose thee: cruel one!
Canst thou speak to me, and repeat to me
So horrible a wish?—I rather will
From this hour forth perpetually watch
Over thy life.

My.— Thou, thou watch o'er my life?
Must I, at ev'ry instant, I, behold thee?
Thee evermore before my eyes? Ah, first
I will that these same eyes of mine be closed
In everlasting darkness: I myself
With these my very hands would pluck them first
From my own face. . . .

Ce.— O Heav'ns! What hear I? . . .
Heav'ns! . . .
Thou mak'st me shudder. Then thou hatest me? . . .

My.—Thou first, thou sole, eternal, fatal cause
Of all my wretchedness——

Ce.— What words are these? . . .
O daughter! . . . I the cause? . . . But, see, thy tears
Gush forth in torrents. . . .

My.— Pardon, pardon me! . . .
It is not I that speak; an unknown power
Rules my distemper'd organs. . . . Dearest mother!
Too much thou lovest me; and I——

Ce.— Dost thou
Deem me the cause? . . .

My.— Yes, thou, alas! hast been,
In giving life to such an impious wretch,
The cause of all my woes: and art so still,
If thou refusest now to take it from me;
Now that I importune thee for this deed

So fervently. There yet is time for this;
Still am I innocent, almost. . . . But, O! . . .
Against such agonies . . . my . . . languid . . . frame . . .
No more bears up. . . . My strength, . . . my senses fail
me. . . .

Ce.—To thy apartments suffer me to lead thee.
Thou need'st some cordial to restore thy strength;
This transient frenzy, trust me, hath arisen
From too long fasting. Ah, come thou; in me
Fully confide: I, I alone will serve thee.

ACT V. SCENE I.

Cinyras.

Cinyras.—O ill-starr'd, wretched Pereus! Too true lover! . . .
Ah, had I been more swift in my arrival,
Thou hadst not then perchance within thy breast
The fatal weapon buried.—O great Heav'ns!
What will his poor bereavèd father say?
Espoused and joyful he expected him;
Now will he see him brought before his eyes,
By his own hands destroy'd, a lifeless corpse.—
But I, alas! am I then less than he
Despairing as a father? Is this life,
The state in which, amid atrocious furies,
The frantic Myrrha pines? and is this life,
To which we're doom'd by her mysterious pangs?—
But I will question her; and I have arm'd
My heart in iron mail. She well deserves
(And this she knows) my anger; as a proof,
She tardily obeys my summons hither:
Yet, my command hath she already heard
By the third messenger.—Assuredly
Beneath these pangs of hers there is conceal'd
Some secret no less dreadful than important.
I, from her lips, will now hear all the truth,
Or never, never more will I henceforth
Admit her to my presence. . . . But (O Heav'ns!),

If she's condemn'd to everlasting tears,
Though innocent, by force of destiny,
And by the anger of offended gods,
Should I to such calamities as these
Add the displeasure of a father? Should I,
Despairing, and despised, abandon her
To ling'ring death? . . . Alas! at such a thought
My heart doth break. . . . But, yet, in part, at least,
'Tis indispensable that I should hide,
From her, in this my last experiment,
My boundless fondness. Never hath she yet
Heard me address her in reproachful terms:
No maiden surely hath a heart so firm,
As may suffice to hear without emotion
The unaccustom'd menace of a father.—
At length she comes.—Alas, how she approaches
With tardy and reluctant steps! It seems
As if she came to die before my eyes.

SCENE II.

Cinyras, Myrrha.

Cinyras.—Myrrha, I never, never could have thought
That thou regardedst not thy father's honor;
Thou hast too certainly of this convinced me
On this day fatal to us all: but yet,
That thou shouldst now reluctantly obey
Thy sire's express and oft-repeated summons,
E'en this was less expected than the other.

Myrrha.—. . . Thou of my life art arbiter supreme. . . .
I did implore from thee . . . myself, . . . erewhile, . . .
And on this very spot, . . . the punishment . . .
Of my so many, . . . and enormous faults. . . .
My mother, too, was present; . . . wherefore then . . .
Didst thou not kill me? . . .

Cin.— It is time, O Myrrha,
Yes, it is time to alter thy deportment.
In vain thou usest accents of despair;

In vain despairing and confounded looks
Thou fixest on the ground. Through all thy grief,
Alas, too evidently shame appears;
Guilty thou feel'st thyself. Thy heaviest fault,
Is thy concealment with thy father: hence
His anger thoroughly thou meritest;
And that the partial and indulgent love
I bore to thee, my dear and only daughter,
Henceforth should cease.—But what? thy tears gush forth?
Thou tremblest? shudderest? . . . and thou art silent?—
Would, then, thy father's anger be to thee
An insupportable infliction?

My.— Ah! . . .
Worse . . . than the worst of deaths. . . .

Cin.— Hear me.—Thou hast
Render'd thy parents, as thou hast thyself,
A fable to the world, by the sad end
Which thou hast given to thy nuptial rites.
Thy cruel outrage has cut short already
The days of wretched Pereus. . . .

My.— Heav'ns! what hear I?

Cin.—Yes, dead is Pereus; and 'tis thou hast slain him.
Soon as he left our presence, he withdrew,
Alone, and by mute anguish overwhelm'd,
To his apartments: no man durst pursue him.
Too late, alas! I came. . . . He lay, transfix'd
By his own dagger, in a sea of blood:
To me, his eyes bedimm'd with tears, and death,
He raised; . . . and, 'mid his latest sighs, he breathed
The name of Myrrha from his lips.—Ungrateful . . .

My.—Ah, say no more to me. . . . I, I alone
Deserve to breathe my last. . . . And yet I live?

Cin.—The horrid anguish of the wretched father
Of Pereus, I alone can comprehend,
I, who at once am wretched and a father:
Hence, I'm aware what now must be his rage,
His hatred, and his thirst to wreak on us
A just and bitter vengeance.—Hence, not moved

By terror of his arms, but by a just
Compassion for his son, I am resolved
To know from thee, as doth befit a father
Offended and deceived (and at all risks
Do I insist on this), the real cause
Of such a horrible catastrophe.—
Myrrha, in vain wouldst thou conceal it from me:
Thou by thy each least gesture art betray'd.—
Thy broken words; the changes of thy face,
Now dyed with scarlet, and with hues of death
Now blanch'd; thy mute and bosom-heaving sighs;
The ling'ring hectic that consumes thy frame;
Thy restless glances, indirect and stolen;
Thy dumb confusion; and the cleaving shame,
And blushing consciousness that ne'er forsakes thee: . . .
Ah! all that I behold in thee persuades me,
And ineffectual thy denial is, . . .
That these thy furies all . . . love's children are.

My.—I? . . . love's? . . . Ah, think it not! . . . Thou art deceived.

Cin.—The more that thou deniest it, the more
Am I convinced of this. And I, alas!
Am but too well assured, that this thy flame,
Which thou so pertinaciously dost hide,
To some degrading object owes its birth.

My.—Alas! . . . what art thou thinking? . . . Thou wilt not
Destroy me with thy sword; . . . and thou meanwhile . . .
Destroyest me with words. . . .

Cin.— And darest thou
Assert to me that thou'rt untouch'd by love?
And shouldst thou tell me so, and even dare
Also to swear it, I should deem thee perjured.—
But who is ever worthy of thy heart,
If Pereus, true, incomparable lover,
Could not indeed obtain it?—But so fierce
Are thy emotions; . . . such thy agitation;
So conscious and so passionate thy shame;
And in such terrible vicissitudes
The conflict of these passions is engraved

Upon thy countenance, that all in vain
Thy lips deny the charge. . . .

My.— Ah, wouldst thou then . . .
E'en in thy presence . . . make me . . . die . . . of shame? . . .
And thou a father?

Cin.— And wouldst thou with cruel,
Inflexible, and unavailing silence,
Poison, and prematurely terminate
The days of a fond father who doth love thee
Far better than himself?—I'm yet a father:
Banish thy fear; whatever be thy flame
(So that I once might see thee happy), I,
If thou confess it to me, for thy sake,
Am capable of any sacrifice.
I saw, and still I see (unhappy daughter!)
The struggle generous and horrible,
Which tears thy heart to pieces betwixt love
And duty. Thou hast done too much already,
To sense of right self-sacrificed: but love,
More pow'rful than thyself, forbids the off'ring.
Passion may be excused; its impulses
Oft foil our best endeavors to resist them;
But to withhold thy secret from thy father,
Who prays for, who commands, thy confidence,
Admits of no excuse.

My.— O death, O death,
Whom I so much invoke, wilt thou still be
Deaf to my grief? . . .

Cin.— Ah, daughter, try to calm,
Ah, try to calm thy heart: if thou wilt not
Make me hereafter more incensed against thee,
I am already almost pacified;
Provided thou wilt speak to me. Ah, speak
To me, as to a brother. Even I
Love by experience know: the name——

My.— O Heav'ns! . . .
I love, yes; since thou forcest me to say it;
I desperately love, and love in vain.

But, who's the object of that hopeless passion,
Nor thou, nor any one, shalt ever know:
He knows it not himself . . . and even I
Almost deny it to myself.

Cin.— And I
Both will, and ought to know it. Nor canst thou
Be cruel to thyself, except thou be
At the same time still more so to thy parents,
Who thee adore, thee only. Speak, ah, speak!—
Thou see'st already, from an angry father,
That I become a weeping supplicant:
Thou canst not die, without condemning us
To share thy tomb.—He, whosoe'er he be,
Whom thou dost love, I will that he be thine.
The monarch's foolish pride can never tear
The true love of a father from my breast.
Thy love, thy hand, my realm, may well convert
The lowest individual to a rank
Lofty and noble: and I feel assured
That he whom thou couldst love, could never be
Wholly unworthy, though of humble birth.
I do conjure thee, speak: whate'er the cost,
I wish thee saved.

My.— Me saved? . . . What dreamest thou? . . .
These very words accelerate my death. . . .
Let me, for pity's sake, ah, let me quickly
Forever . . . drag myself . . . from thee. . . .

Cin.— O daughter,
Sole, and belovèd; O, what say'st thou? Ah!
Come to thy father's arms.—O Heav'ns! like one
Distract, and frantic, thou repellest me?
Thou then dost hate thy father? and dost thou
Burn with so vile a passion that thou fearest . . .

My.—Ah no, it is not vile; . . . my flame is guilty;
Nor ever . . .

Cin.— What is this thou sayest? Guilty,
Provided that thy sire condemn it not,
It cannot be: reveal it.

My.— Thou wouldst see

Even that sire himself with horror shudder,
If it should reach the ears of . . . Cinyras. . . .

Cin.—What do I hear!

My.— What have I said? . . . alas! . . .
I know not what I say. . . . I do not love. . . .
Ah, think it not; O no! . . . Ah, suffer me,
I for the last time fervently conjure thee,
To hasten from thy presence.

Cin.— Thankless one:
Now, by exasperating thus my rage
With thy fantastic moods, by trifling thus
With my excessive grief, eternally
Now hast thou forfeited thy father's love.

My.—O cruel, bitter, and ferocious menace! . . .
Now, in the anguish of my dying gasp,
Swiftly approaching, . . . to my pangs so dire,
So various, and so fierce, will now be added
The cruel execration of my father? . . .
Shall it be mine to die, removed from thee? . . .
O happy is my mother! . . . she, at least,
Press'd in thy arms . . . may breathe . . . her latest sigh. . . .

Cin.—What wouldst thou say to me? . . . What dreadful light
Breaks from these words! . . . Thou, impious one, perchance? . . .

My.—O Heav'ns! what have I said indeed? . . . Alas!
Unhappy I! . . . Where am I? . . . Whither now
Shall I betake myself? . . . Where shall I die?—
But now thy dagger may befriend me. . . .

Cin.— Daughter! . . .
What hast thou done? my dagger . . .

My.— Lo! . . . to thee . . .
I now restore it. . . . I at least possess'd
A hand as swift and desp'rate as my tongue.

Cin.—. . . I'm petrified . . . with fear . . . and agony,
With pity, . . . and with rage.

My.— O Cinyras! . . .
Thou . . . see'st me . . . now . . . expiring . . . in thy presence. . . .

I have . . . at once . . . both known how . . . to avenge
Thee, . . . and myself . . . to punish. . . . Thou thyself,
By dint of force, from out my heart . . . didst wrest . . .
The horrid secret. . . . But, since with my life
Alone . . . it left my lips, . . . I die . . . less guilty. . . .

Cin.—O day! O crime! . . . O grief!—To whom my tears? . . .

My.—Ah, weep no more; . . . I merit not thy tears. . . .
Shun my contagious presence; . . . and conceal . . .
From Cecris . . . ever——

Cin.— Wretchedest of fathers! . . .
And doth the gaping earth not burst asunder
To swallow me alive? . . . I dare not now
Approach the dying and flagitious woman; . . .
And yet, I cannot utterly abandon
My immolated daughter. . . .

SCENE III.

Cecris, Eurycleia, Cinyras, Myrrha.

Cecris.— By the shrieks
Of death brought hither——

Cinyras.— Do not thou advance. . . .
O Heav'ns! . . .

Ce.— To my dear daughter's side. . . .

Myrrha.— O voice!

Eurycleia.—Ah, spectacle of horror! on the earth
Myrrha lies welt'ring in her blood? . . .

Ce.— My daughter? . . .

Cin.—Stop . . .

Ce.— Murder'd! . . . How? by whom? . . . I will behold
her. . . .

Cin.—Ah, stop . . . and hear with terror. . . . With my dagger
She, . . . with her own hand, has transpierced herself. . . .

Ce.—And dost thou thus desert thy daughter? . . . Ah!
I will myself . . .

Cin.— She is no more our daughter.
With a detestable, disgraceful love
She burn'd for . . . Cinyras. . . .

Ce.— What do I hear?—
O crime! . . .

Cin.— Ah, come! I pray thee let us go,
To die with agony and shame elsewhere.

Ce.—Impious . . . O daughter! . . .

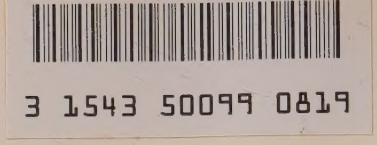
Cin.— Come thou! . . .

Ce.— Hapless one! . . .
Not once more to embrace her? . . .

SCENE IV.

Myrrha, Eurycleia.

Myrrha.— When I ask'd . . .
It . . . of thee, . . . thou, . . . O Eurycleia, . . . then . . .
Shouldest . . . have given . . . to my hands . . . the sword: . . .
I had died . . . guiltless; . . . guilty . . . now . . . I die. . . .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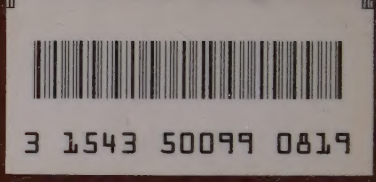
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